

THE SING- SING

B. J. George T. Green, D. D.

DORRANCE



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THE SINS OF—

By J. GEORGE T. GRANT, D.D.

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PROLOGUE

“Gentlemen, the Queen.”

“The Queen, God bless her.”

The toast was drunk in silence, followed by deafening cheers. In every quarter of the globe this toast was being proposed to one of the most wonderful and beloved of all women, Queen Victoria. It was the twenty-eighth day of June, 1897, and her Majesty's subjects were wild with enthusiasm, in pledging their Queen, who this day was celebrating the sixtieth year of her reign. London was gayly decorated in all the paraphernalia which speaks of joy. Its streets and parks were thronged with merry-makers from all quarters of the globe. Stately Indian Princes and their train, Fifth Avenue habitués, Counts, Barons, Dukes and Earls were for the week, at any rate, making London their rendezvous.

The day had been one of perfection. No clouds had marred the sky, and the sun had sunk to rest, bathed in colors of which artists dream. A warm evening followed and practically everybody was out of doors. A crowd had assembled down Park Lane, for the Duke of Hampshire was giving a Royal Ball and all Society, with a very big “S,” would be in attendance. Cheers greeted the various notables as they left their carriages and slowly wended their way up the broad, carpet-covered stone steps which led to the Duke's house.

In a house a few doors away, Lord Bitterne, im-

maculately dressed, sat impatiently waiting for his wife who had not yet finished dressing. His Lordship was one of those gentlemen who immediately gave one the impression of a thorough snob. He was mean to the very letter, and although he held a responsible cabinet position, he was not at all persona grata with his colleagues. His wife, Lady Bitterne, was a pretty little woman, the daughter of a country solicitor, who had managed Lord Bitterne's country estate. His Lordship had met the daughter at a dance given by his mother at the Manor, and although he had given the world in which he lived to understand that he would remain a perpetual bachelor, he deceived them, and at the same time outraged their noble feelings by marrying Nancy Carstairs. Nancy herself could not at the time realize that she was actually to marry this austere man. In the first place, she was afraid of him and not only that, but her love was already pledged to her boy sweetheart.

Jack Matthews, the son of the Vicar, had asked her to wait for him, and she had promised. Of course that was a long time ago, and Jack, now Major in the Bengal Artillery, was a long way from home. Nevertheless, Nancy still loved him, and Jack regularly wrote and told her of his affections. Her father, however, insisted that she marry Lord Bitterne and pooh-poohed any such nonsense as love between her and Jack Matthews.

Nancy gave her promise to Lord Bitterne, and a month later they were quietly married. This was five years ago, and their boy was now three years of age. Nancy had always regretted her hasty promise to marry Lord Bitterne. His infatuation had soon worn off. He treated her with disdain. She had failed miserably in his estimation to live up to her station.

Nancy had done her best, but she felt lost in the circle in which her husband moved.

Tonight, Lord and Lady Bitterne were attending the Duke of Hampshire's ball, and their carriage was waiting. His Lordship glanced at his watch, and noting that it was a few minutes to ten, he lost complete control of his temper. Hastily ascending the stairs, and without waiting for permission to enter, he threw open the door of his wife's room and demanded with asperity, whether she intended to keep him waiting all the evening.

Lady Bitterne did not feel at all well. Her face was white and drawn as though she were suffering pain. He was quick to note her appearance, but instead of enlisting his sympathy, or at least what little feeling of affection he had for her, it only increased his anger. He quickly realized that it would be impossible for her to attend the ball, and to go without her would only set tongues wagging, as it was fairly well known that Lord Bitterne had regretted marrying beneath his station in life, and knew how incompetent his wife really was to adapt herself to society's ways.

Lady Bitterne rose and moved unsteadily towards her husband. "All right, all right," snarled his Lordship, "I can see that you are not fit to go out, but why in the name of goodness could you not have chosen some other evening in which to fall ill?" and without waiting to bid his wife goodnight he descended the stairs and taking his hat from the butler, he entered his carriage, resolved that he would attend the ball at all events and let people think what they might.

When her husband had left the room, Lady Bitterne sank into a chair, and bidding her maid put away the finery that she was about to wear, dismissed her. Her face was still pale, but she seemed very much relieved

at the departure of her husband. After a few minutes she drew her chair to the window and let the cool night air play on her fevered brow. As she looked out over the park and noted the joyful throngs threading their way through the brilliantly illumined grounds, a deep sadness came over her.

That morning she had received a note from Jack Matthews, the first for five long years. After inquiring after her health, and that of her husband and son, he had intimated, that being in London for a few hours, he would take the liberty of calling on her that evening. The receipt of this letter had opened again the wound in her heart that she thought was already healed. She dared not let her husband know, for his jealousy had been the hardest thing to bear in her married life, for he had known of her engagement in the early days, and had alluded to it with contempt.

Lady Bitterne had decided that she would go to the Ball and let Jack Matthews think that she had not received his letter, but the sudden shock had proved too much for her. Jack Matthews, now Major, rang the bell with a certain amount of trepidation and nervousness. It had been a bitter fight for him these five long years, for he had loved Nancy with the love that only comes once into a man's life. He was admitted by the butler who carried his card to Lady Bitterne. Nancy slowly, very slowly, descended the stairs, one hand pressed to her heart, praying for strength to go through the ordeal of meeting her first and only love.

Major Matthews rose to his feet on her entrance.

"I hope that your Ladyship will pardon," he began, and then stopped. Her face told him everything that he would have given his life to avert. An unhappy marriage contract. "My dear, oh my dear," was all

he could say, while he clung to the little hand she had offered him on her entrance.

Nancy tried to smile to make light of the secret that she had unwittingly revealed. "Nancy dear, why didn't you wait for me? God knows I too have suffered. If only your father—"

"Hush, Jack, father is dead; he did not understand, and I am sure that he thought it all for the best."

Jack Matthews came very close to her, "Nancy, promise me if ever you need a friend—"

"When you have finished making love to my wife, I should be glad if you will leave my house, you scoundrel." The cold, hard voice of Lord Bitterne broke upon them like a pistol shot.

"Edward, dear, this is Major Matthews; you remember hearing me speak of him," said Lady Bitterne in a trembling voice.

Lord Bitterne took notice of his wife's words, but kept his eyes fixed on Major Matthews.

"I bid you leave, sir," he said, "or I will have you thrown out as I would a dog."

Major Matthews looked contemptuously at his lordship for a moment and then said:

"I am afraid that you have made a bitter mistake. Lady Bitterne is an old friend of mine, and being in London for a few hours, I called to pay my respects. I have no wish to remain any longer in your house, sir, and I bid you goodnight."

He crossed over to Nancy and taking her hand bade her good-bye and left the house.

Jack Matthews did not want to add to the unhappiness which he knew Nancy suffered, but he restrained himself with difficulty when he thought of the insulting words Lord Bitterne had used. He walked slowly to the hotel at which he was staying the night, resolved

that for Nancy's sake, and for the sake of her son he would never see her again. Within an hour after his departure from Lord Bitterne's residence, Nancy, carrying a small portmanteau containing what few personal effects she needed, left her home forever. The last words she ever heard her husband say were, "Never let me see your face again, you abandoned woman, you outcast."

It was a heartbroken woman who, in a voice filled with pain, asked for a ticket to Leewood, a little village some twenty miles outside of London. It was after midnight when she alighted at the station. She gave her ticket to the sleepy looking porter, and made her way down the quiet lane that led to her destination. The moon cast its golden shadows over the tiny hamlet, a thousand scents were in the air. From a nearby coppice came the sweet cadence of the nightingale, but Nancy neither saw nor heard. Presently she came to a little white cottage and knocking at the door, waited. The motherly old dame, who had nursed her in infancy, received her with open arms and with tears streaming down her wrinkled cheeks, listened to Nancy's sad story. "Stay with me dear, please God, I will look after you."

Nancy pleaded that her husband should never know her whereabouts, and her old nurse promised that she would never disclose her hiding-place.

Five months afterward, Nancy, Lady Bitterne passed away.

I

The Reverend Robert Stone, M.A., Oxon, Vicar of St. Martha's Episcopal Church, had just finished his breakfast, or to be more correct, the Reverend Robert had finished eating for the simple reason that it would be impossible for him to eat any more. The Reverend Mr. Stone was a portly gentleman just turned forty years of age, of medium height, head slightly bald, and face clean shaven. There were two things in life that the Reverend Mr. Stone never lost, his appetite and his temper. There is an old adage, that, "Feed a man and his temper departs." If this be true, the Reverend Robert had chased away beyond all hopes of recovery, if not exactly a virtue, at least that one little ingredient which give men the fighting spirit.

The father of Robert Stone had been a successful manufacturer of earthenware. Possessed of the one son, his wife being dead, he lost no time in giving him a tolerable education. Eton was followed by Oxford, and eventually graduating at the latter, found Robert in no way inclined to work. He loathed the business in which his father made a competent income, and not having enough energy to study for the bar, and certainly having no desire to serve his country, it would appear that Robert was doomed to a life of perpetual idleness, when unfortunately for him his father's business failed.

After gathering together what few pounds there were left from the wreck of his business, his father insisted that his son take them and enter some profes-

sion where he could be self-supporting. All professions being obnoxious to Robert, he stood a good chance of either having to beg or dig, when an old friend of the family persuaded him to try the Church. He did so and was eventually appointed to the curacy of some East End Parish. His father died shortly afterwards consoled with the thought that his son was provided for.

For nearly a year the Reverend Robert lived after the manner of an East End Curate. He bitterly detested the poor, and regularly dodged a part, if not all, of his duties which necessitated his being brought into contact with his parishioners. All hope of ever ridding himself of his environments being dead, Robert once or twice thought seriously about borrowing money and going to the colonies, when chance knocked at his door.

One named William Higgins, on a certain day some twenty years previously, had backed a winner. The winnings in this case amounting to nearly forty pounds. William first of all got exceedingly drunk; secondly he invested the remainder of his capital in a small public house.

Now William was a good fellow, generous and open-handed, so it naturally followed that his Pub was well patronized. At the end of five years he had two public houses under his control. At the end of ten years he sold both and with the proceeds went into partnership with a local brewer, whose funds happened to be at low ebb at that particular time. Thanks to the energy displayed by William, the business grew so rapidly that in a few years, William, now Mr. Higgins, was a very wealthy man.

In spite of his wealth, however, he still kept his own circle of friends who resided in that portion of London known as Bow.

His wife, a buxom dame, with all the pomp and ceremony which characterizes the self-made rich, made repeated and divers calls on the friends of her youth. Her daughter Sarah, at this time nearly twenty years of age, invariably accompanied her mother on these periodical voyages into her youthful days. Not from any desire to make friends with the ladies of Bow, but rather to keep strict guard over her mother, who, if the truth may be told, was easily led to drinking more than was good for a lady of her age, and the convivial fellowship of these tea drinking visits was too often accompanied by a smell of gin. To do the old lady justice she was not a drunkard by any means, but was always afraid of giving offense by refusing to accept "just a little drop more."

One day Mrs. Higgins received a note to the effect that Betsy Smith, a life-long friend, was in trouble with her landlord, insomuch that the bailiff had taken possession of what little furniture she had, simply because she was unable to pay her rent. On the receipt of this note, Mrs. Higgins, accompanied as usual by her charming daughter, drove down to the East End with the intention of assisting her friend. This act being accomplished to the perfect satisfaction of every one concerned, they were leaving the neighborhood when fate, having that day compelled the Reverend Robert to visit the aforesaid Betty Smith sorely against his inclinations, brought the fair Sarah and her mother face to face with this spiritual comforter.

Now Robert had often heard people speak of this curious pair and inadvertently he had heard that Mr. Higgins was a millionaire and without waiting for an introduction, which of course from Mrs. Higgins' point of view was totally unnecessary, he made himself

acquainted, and received a warm invitation to visit them at their home in Maida Vale.

That night Robert resolved that come what may he would endeavor to win Sarah Higgins. A month afterwards he was the accepted husband of the brewer's daughter.

Sarah had no redeeming quality whatsoever. Her early training, combined with her acquaintances of Maida Vale, had made Sarah a vulgar snob, with only two objects in life; one, to enter real society; the other, love of scandal. Now she saw in Robert a way in which to meet on somewhat equal footing the class that so far refused to recognize her. Her father being delighted to get her off his hands, for truth to tell she was somewhat of a nuisance, gladly gave his consent, likewise a hundred thousand pounds.

Mr. Higgins also discovered that money was sorely needed by the Bishop for some purpose or other, and openly called and offered to give the amount needed in return for a vicarship for his future son-in-law. The Bishop naturally was delighted to do any little favors for his dear brother; consequently on the day Robert promised to endow Sarah with all his worldly goods, he received the joyful news that he was appointed to the living of St. Martha's Church, the richest and the most aristocratic church in London.

It seemed as though Sarah's dream of shining in society's circles was about to become realized. Sad to say it was only partly so. There were many members of the upper ten who still treated, with almost contempt, the efforts of Mrs. Stone to force herself on their lists. Her father and mother both dying shortly after her union with Robert, and leaving her every thing they possessed, which in addition to a half share in a brewery also consisted of half a million

pounds sterling, society hastily concluded that dear Mrs. Stone was a person worth knowing. Henceforth Sarah wanted not for invitations, either in Park Lane or Country Mansions.

As she sat facing her better half on the morning on which our story opens, she had just finished reading the letters which were always numerous, being chiefly invitations to some tea-drinking affair where scandal took the place of the biscuits.

Robert Stone with a wave of his hand dismissed the footman, who had been wondering in his mind whether his master would die a natural death or burst. He used to say to the staff of menials who also resided in the edifice “’Ow’e puts away hall that grub without bursting beats me.”

“I see, my dear,” said the worthy Vicar, “that Lord Bitterne is much worse this morning. The doctors have given up hope and a cablegram has been sent to the Honorable George asking him to return home immediately.

“Dear me,” replied Mrs. Stone, “I shall be sorry to hear of the death of Lord Bitterne.”

“Yes, yes, of course, of course, very worthy of you, my dear, we shall lose a very good friend to our congregation, but it is the Lord’s will, the Lord’s will. I wonder whether the son will take after his father,” said Robert musingly.

“I am sure I hope so,” replied Mrs. Stone, in a voice that implied that she hoped not. “You see the Honorable George has been such a profligate these last few years. Lord Bitterne sent him out to America in hopes that he would turn over a new leaf, but the latest reports are not at all consoling. He was mixed up in that divorce in New York, and nearly got shot by one man who complained that he paid too much attention

to his wife. His mother you know ran away with some Major when he was only three years of age. You may depend upon it he has his mother's blood."

Mrs. Stone was now upon a topic in which her soul delighted, and no doubt would have added a few more choice items regarding the personal character of George, when an exclamation from her husband drew her attention.

"What do you think my dear, of this letter? It is from young Bains, you remember, my dear, he was my colleague during my unfortunate residence in Bow. He says here that he is very unhappy on account of his income being so small and wonders if I would use my influence with the Bishop to get him appointed to some church where the stipend would be larger. Why I never heard of such a presumption in my life, never! The poor must have clergymen to attend to their spiritual needs and I am sure he is getting more than enough to enable him to live in comfort. Only last year his salary was increased by twenty pounds. He must be receiving over a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Dear me, how sad it is when we worship Baal."

Unconsciously Robert was quite right. It is very sad to worship the God of Baal when the said God proves to be of no more value than a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Now if it had been a hundred and fifty thousand pounds Robert Stone might have forgiven his unfortunate brother.

"Well," said Mrs. Stone with a disdainful toss of her head, "don't bother answering. If he is dissatisfied with his pay let him try something else. By the way, Robert, have you yet decided who is to be Junior Curate at St. Martha's?"

St. Martha's had just lost one of its curates through

ill health, and Mr. Stone was now seeking a suitable successor to complete his staff.

"Yes, yes, of course my dear. I intended telling you the news last night but it escaped my memory. I think I have been successful in obtaining John Keen, whose uncle, Sir Richard, is our neighbor in Hampshire. Sir Richard spoke to me yesterday at the club. The Bishop will, no doubt, be delighted to allow him to come under my charge."

"Has he had much experience?" asked Mrs. Stone.

"No, my dear, I am afraid not very much. You see the month he was ordained the war broke out and he went over to France as a Chaplain with the Wiltshires; he stayed right through the war, so you see, my dear, he has no experience of parish work, but I trust that in a very short time we shall be able to make him a tower of strength to our church."

Mrs. Stone was pleased to think that John Keen had such a distinguished relative, which, she said, would give a decided tone to the atmosphere of St. Martha's. What she really meant her husband was somewhat at a loss to understand, but as he was too well fed to argue or ask questions of his wife, he emphatically agreed that it would indeed.

"Now, my dear, I am afraid that I shall not be in to lunch. I have an appointment at the club at eleven, and from there I am to lunch with the Bishop and finally settle the arrangements regarding John Keen. If you would care for a little relaxation this evening I will take seats at the Queens Hall. Kayloff, that marvelous baritone, has taken the town by storm."

"Yes, I really think that I should like to go, for I have a busy day before me," said Mrs. Stone.

The busy day for Mrs. Stone consisted of a visit to her dressmaker at twelve, afterwards lunch with some

friends at Hampstead, followed by a strenuous afternoon at bridge.

The Reverend Robert, kissing his dutiful wife, literally waddled to his car, a superb Rolls Royce, and was rapidly driven to his club.

II

Even the very buildings of New York City seemed to be perspiring. Countless throngs lazily wended their way hither and thither, the male section for the most part were hatless and coatless, while the weaker sex openly defied the law. The day had been one of the hottest known for many years, and although it was not yet July, the casual traveler could easily imagine himself in some tropical city.

The cafes with which Broadway is so plentifully stocked, notwithstanding the great heat, seemed to be doing plenty of business. They were brilliantly illuminated and the sound of music issued through the open windows, and in some cases the popping of corks, for in spite of prohibition one was still able to purchase a fairly good bottle of wine although the prices were outrageous; but to the thirsty mortal a drink seemed to be the cheapest thing to buy.

Youngsteins was particularly busy. It boasted of one of the finest and most elaborate dance halls in New York, if not in the whole of America. The hall was cooled by a special arrangement of electric fans, which enabled its many and varied patrons to enjoy their favorite pastime even in the warmest weather. Leading off from the dancing space was a spacious conservatory plentifully stocked with palms, and tastefully arrayed with bowers, where couples could converse or make love without being seen.

The orchestra had just finished playing a popular waltz, and a young couple made their way into the conservatory. The man was a well-built, clean-cut

type of about twenty-five years of age, nicely dressed, with an air of distinction. He was the sort of man that commanded attention, and one could easily guess that he would have no trouble in finding a dancing partner. One thing, however, was noticeable, and that was a weak mouth combined with an air of weariness. This was not to be wondered at, for since the Honorable George Langley, only son of Lord Bitterne, had landed in New York scarcely two months before, he had been going the pace with a vengeance. His liberality combined with his good looks and cheerful disposition had made him a persona grata, not only in society circles, but more so in the community which generally existed around the various places of amusement.

George, or Georgie, as he had become more familiarly called, had obtained distinction in every cafe on Broadway. His fame had even extended to the distant Bowery, where he had on several occasions spent evenings, not to mention dollars. Youngsteins' held the record however, and in consequence a gaily dressed crowd was nearly always in attendance.

At the outbreak of the war George had immediately entered the Navy where he speedily gained the good will of his shipmates. He was cool and daring in the face of danger, and had several times been mentioned for meritorious conduct. His failing was obvious—love of women's society. On one occasion he swam ashore from his ship, a distance of nearly a mile, with the glass almost down to freezing point, in order to keep tryst with a bar-maid whom he had met the evening before and rashly promised to see again the following night, knowing full well that it was his watch on duty. Thanks to the rule among brother officers to stand by each other, he escaped being punished.

During the battle of Jutland, George received a wound in the head which seriously affected his eyesight. He was invalided from the service, and after a few months' rest he became entangled in some love affair with a pretty little chorus girl which threatened to end in marriage. Lord Bitterne hastily sent him over to New York on business of his own, in hopes that his son would get over his infatuation and George, being somewhat uncertain himself whether he loved little Mary Richards, the chorus girl, or not, decided to take the trip. His father made him a most liberal allowance and George had found no difficulty in spending it.

Two weeks after he landed in New York he was mixed up in a divorce scandal. It is only fair to add that George in this case was not entirely guilty. The lady in question had purposely used him for her own ends. There had been a mutual understanding between the lady and her husband that a divorce had become necessary, and the lady intended to add if possible an air of distinction to the divorce proceedings.

As George entered the conservatory he dropped wearily into a chair, while his partner with a tired yawn sat in his lap. She was one of those girls who appear to make a living and yet escape paying the price. George was too generous to refuse any demand from the fair sex, especially if they were gifted with any looks worth speaking about; consequently he was a veritable gold mine to girls of this class. He appeared to be too tired this evening, at any rate, to pay very much attention to the charming damsel who sought to please him. After a few coaxing words from his little girl friend, he gave her what she desired, the price of a new gown or something that she intended to buy. Hastily slipping the roll of bills inside of her

dress she implanted a kiss on his cheek and gaily flitted away.

Now in spite of his failings George had one good friend by the name of Steven Hargraves. Steven had acted as war correspondent for an influential New York Daily. A shell had exploded a little bit too near at the time he was writing an article for his paper, and Steven had lost his right arm. On arriving back in New York the newspaper Company gave him a pension of three hundred dollars a month. Although the loss of his arm was a serious blow to him, he resolved to practice with his left hand until he was proficient, and then once again take up his old profession of journalism. Steven, to look at, was just an ordinary, everyday sort of person with a very dry expression which made one naturally think that he was ill-tempered. His looks belied his nature, for he was a typical American gentleman; the soul of honor and chivalry, incapable of deceit. He had met George on board the ship that brought them over, and a friendship had sprung up between them that was real.

Steven was allowing his friend to have as much rope as possible in the hope that he would speedily grow sick of the unhealthy dissipated life in which the revellers of Broadway indulge. Nevertheless, he kept a strict watch over the harpies that invariably infest these so-called houses of joy, and had rescued his friend on more than one occasion from what might have been an unpleasant situation. He had been watching George the best part of the evening, and after making a guess that George had parted with more good money he came to the conclusion that it was time to go. He accordingly arose and seeking his friend together they left the house.

The air outside seemed hotter if anything than it

was when they entered Youngsteins' and they idly sauntered towards their hotel. George had taken a small suite of rooms in a very good hotel and had persuaded Steven to share them with him. Steven nothing loth and cognizant of the fact that this arrangement would enable him to keep an eye on George willingly consented.

They reached their rooms as the clock was striking one A. M. and immediately proceeded to undress; then, clad only in their pajamas, they put out the lights and entered the living room, where a small screen-covered balcony proved such a blessing on these warm evenings.

Steven had pressed his friend to retire but George was adamant and insisted on having his good-night smoke as usual.

"If I were you, old chap," said Steven, "I should certainly ease up on the girlie stuff. Why my dear George, as long as there is a dollar to be squeezed out of you they will cling like ivy to the old church wall."

George smiled, "My dear Steven, do you suppose for one instant that I am not fully aware of the fact? Why bless me, it is just my nature to seek the society of the feminine gender and I can assure you that I always play the game."

"Yes, George, I quite believe that; otherwise, I am afraid that your humble friend would not stick around quite so much; but say, have you never had any serious thoughts as regards women? I mean were you ever in love? You must excuse me if I touch on a delicate subject for I certainly do not want to pry into your family history as it were, but I have often wondered about it."

George lazily blew a puff of smoke into the air before he replied.

“Steven, I am ashamed to say that I do not quite know myself whether I have ever been in love or not. You know my pater sent me out here for the simple reason that I wanted to marry a little chorus girl whom I met in London. She had no pedigree and of course the old chap was furious. I honestly thought at the time that I really loved this girl, Mary Richards, and there are times when I feel sorry that I did not marry her. God knows that she was far above me, whatever her social station may have been. I asked her to wait twelve months, to satisfy the Pater, and damn it all, Steven, she actually released me from my promise to marry her on the grounds that I had made a mistake, and gave me the same stupid reasons that my father had advanced, no “*locus standi*” in society and so on. I sometimes wish that I had been born a navvy, or at least without the prospects of coming into the peerage. Some day perhaps I may marry Mary after all,” said George musingly, “but tell me Steven, how about yourself? You certainly do not seem to have the least desire for the company of women. Weren’t you ever in love?”

“Yes,” replied Steven, “I was once in love.”

“Did she love you, Steven?”

“Yes,” said Steven, “she loved me.”

“Then why in God’s name didn’t you marry her?”

“I did,” replied Steven, and here his voice became very gentle, “God needed her more than I did; she died, old man.”

George reached across and silently gripped his friend by the hand. No other word was spoken until they arose to turn in when, bidding each other goodnight, they sought their respective couches.

George was strangely moved over Steven’s story and for a long time he lay and wondered whether he could

ever love Mary Richards as Steven had evidently loved his lost wife. Then his thoughts wandered to his mother, the mother that he could not remember. His father had told him that she died when he was three years of age, but he had heard other stories that made his heart ache. His father was a very cold man, perhaps he had treated his mother unjustly. Here George clenched his hands when he thought that perhaps his mother was alive even now. He was very tired and after a while fell asleep and dreamed of a sweet faced lady who called him her son.

The sun had risen a good many hours before he awoke. Steven was already up and dressed, and was patiently waiting for his friend. Steven never cared to awaken George after a tiring night, but always let him have his sleep out. It did not take George very long to perform his oblutions, and in a short time they sat down to breakfast.

"I may take it then for granted, Steven," said George, "that when I return to England you will come with me?"

"Yes," replied Steven, "I should very much like to spend a few months over there; that is of course, if I shall not be in the way."

"My dear boy, I value your friendship more than I can say. You have been my mainstay ever since I have been in your country. I shall never forget that night in the Bowery when you rescued me from almost certain death. Nothing in the world will give me more pleasure than to have you as my guest, and I am delighted to think that you will cross the pond with me. Well! well! this will never do, I promised to meet Kitty Lambert at eleven-thirty. Coming my way, Steven?"

Steven had to see a journalistic friend, and as he

lived in the neighborhood for which George was bound, together they descended to the lobby.

Steven stopped at the desk to give some directions to the clerk when he heard his name mentioned and turning around came face to face with an elderly lady.

"Land sakes alive if it ain't Steve. How are you, Steve?"

Steven's eyes shone with pleasure as apologizing for his left hand he heartily seized her own outstretched one.

"Why! Mrs. Cochrane, whatever are you doing in New York? Let me introduce you to my friend, the Honorable George Langley. This is Mrs. Cochrane, George, whom I have known for nearly twenty years."

"Real pleased to meet you Honorable. Gee! I have always hankered to meet a real swell. How do you do sir?"

George, without showing the least embarrassment cordially shook her hand.

"Mrs. Cochrane knew me as a little boy, George," explained Steven. "My father used to send me to her farm every summer. Now, Mrs. Cochrane, tell me what are you doing in New York and where is Mr. Cochrane?" he added.

"Why, Steve, poor Sam died nearly two years ago."

Steven hastily apologized and expressed his heartfelt sympathy.

"Yes," Mrs. Cochrane continued, "me and Sam made up our minds two years ago that one day we should take a trip to Europe, and just when we were about to start Sam caught the flu and died, poor dear. His last words to me was, 'Martha, I guess you'll have to take that trip alone, I sure want you to go, promise me you will.' I promised him I would and here I am going to cross the water tomorrow in the Ryland. I feel

that lonely, you wouldn't believe; every time a street car whizzes by I am scared to death. Why, Steven, I never knew there were so many people in the world. If I hadn't promised Sam, I sure would go right back to Texas. Of course you heard about the ranch, Steve, didn't you?"

Steven replied in the negative and Mrs. Cochrane informed him of how oil had been found in tremendous quantities, and how a syndicate had purchased the ranch for three million dollars.

"It is so much money, Steve, that I don't know what to do with it. Why me and Sam worked so hard all these years and all we could save was nine thousand dollars. It don't seem right to me somehow that we should have to work so hard to save a few dollars and then get all that money for nothing."

It appeared to be a great mystery to Mrs. Cochrane and no doubt she would have tried to explain it better to Steven when the bell-boy touched George on the shoulder.

"Telegram for you, sir."

George tore open the missive and read, "Come home at once, father dying."

George turned very faint as the telegram slowly fluttered to the ground.

Steven rescued it and seeing his friend's plight, read it. He then quietly led George to a chair and after seeing him seated, returned to Mrs. Cochrane.

"Please excuse me now, Mrs. Cochrane, I shall see you tomorrow. My friend and I are crossing on the Ryland."

III

The house in which resided the Reverend Mr. Robert Stone was situated in Regents Park. It was one of those dingy looking edifices which seemed to have absorbed the fog of bygone generations. Being a typical London residence however and notwithstanding the outward appearance its interior was well arranged. It was furnished according to the ideas of its mistress, which in this case meant as much elaborate furniture as could possibly be placed in the commodious rooms. What Mrs. Stone termed her boudoir would have been the envy of every coster-monger in London. The only room which bore any appearance of taste was that which Mr. Stone called his study. Here one could recognize a certain amount of refinement due, no doubt, to his sojourn at Oxford.

It was the fifth of July and Robert Stone noted with satisfaction that the day promised to be a fine one. He had been asked to conduct the funeral service for the late Lord Bitterne who had passed away a few days previously. This was the first occasion where he had been called upon to perform this service over one so high in society, and an air of self-importance seemed to pervade his portly being as he reclined, somewhat like an over-fed bear, in his easy chair.

He was expecting a call from his new curate, John Keen. His other colleagues were also due as the Reverend Robert intended that his staff

should be prominent that afternoon at the grave-side. It would naturally give an air of distinction to the service, and they were to call for some final instructions that morning.

John Keen was the first to arrive and was immediately shown to the study.

"My dear boy, welcome to my charge," said Stone, rising to his feet. "I am delighted to think that the nephew of such an old neighbor is to be directly under my care, and I am sure," added the vicar, "that your life has fallen in very pleasant places."

John Keen shook hands warmly and expressed thanks for the kindly welcome of his Vicar. John was a splendid type of manhood. He was clean-shaven, about twenty-eight years of age, and had a kind and gentle expression. He loved humanity especially the poor and needy and looked forward to coming in contact with many such. He had spent four years in France as chaplain to the Wiltshire regiment and had seen things which had brought him very near to his Maker. He was delighted to receive an appointment so soon, and although he would have far rather chosen an East End parish, he realized that there were many poor in the diocese of St. Martha's and resolved speedily to become acquainted with them.

The vicar engaged John in conversation respecting his illustrious relative, and had just mentioned the death of Lord Bitterne when his other two curates were announced.

"Now," said the Vicar, "I wish to introduce to you gentlemen your new colleague, John Keen."

John, with his usual warm smile, greeted the

new arrivals with a friendly handshake. The first to be introduced to John was Frank Grey-marsh who had been in the same house with him at Cambridge. The other curate, Richard Morse, John had not met before.

Richard Morse, or, as he was called by his friends, Dicky, was only a curate at St. Martha's pro tem. During an emergency the Reverend Robert had been obliged to make a call for help and Dicky was the result. Dicky was a frail, narrow-chested little man who wore a perpetual air of amazement. He appeared amazed at meeting John Keen and still more amazed when John offered his hand. One could almost fancy Dicky waking with amazement as though he had just come into the world and retiring with the same bewildered air. Dicky would not have remained longer than a week with the vicar under ordinary circumstances had not the congregation made a startling discovery, to wit: that Dicky Morse knew more about botany and archæology than all the professors in Europe. In this first sermon at St. Martha's he had drifted from ancient buildings in Jerusalem to old historic castles in England and his eloquence had made the congregation gasp with astonishment.

As the audience of St. Martha's consisted principally of families who dwelt in old mansions, Dicky made a decided hit and his superior was warmly congratulated on having found such a wonderful little man. A few weeks later Dicky made his second hit of the season. His text had been "Consider the Lilies of the Field," and he had wound up with a treatise on orchids that made one old Earl swear that he would give a

thousand pounds a year if Dicky would only come down to his estate and manage his collection of valuable plants; and Dicky was literally flooded with invitations to visit various country estates and give his opinion on flowers.

Dicky, as always, was overwhelmed with amazement and wondered what he had said that had made him so popular. Again the vicar received congratulations on his choice of a curate; but to him came a distinct feeling of jealousy, inasmuch that such a poor, undersized specimen of manhood should receive unbounded praise, while he, the Reverend Robert Stone, was hardly ever congratulated.

The truth of the matter was that he preached sermons that were unintelligible, not only to his congregation, but also to himself. His sermons were always based on the surety that God loved the rich and blessed them, but hated the poor because they lived in filth and squalor and constantly got drunk, and sad to say, with the exception of a few, his congregation seemed very well pleased with his diagnosis of sin in general.

Dicky Morse was a most generous little fellow, a source of income to many an old stager. Two crossing-sweepers and a lady flower-seller were kept well supplied with beer on the money they regularly obtained from Dicky on the grounds of poverty and a very earnest desire to lead a new life.

John Keen was quick to read men, and he readily recognized in Dicky a man with a heart almost as large as his body. After the introduction had been satisfactorily performed, the vicar proceeded to give his curates instructions for the afternoon.

"Of course, my dear colleagues, you understand that this is no ordinary funeral service. His Lordship was a great man, I may say a good man, and England has lost a splendid politician. I have been asked by my Lord Bishop to perform the usual rites. I desire you all to be present and assist more or less in the ceremony," said the vicar. John Keen was to read a portion of scripture, Frank Greymarsh to offer a prayer.

The air of self-importance with which he gave his instructions made John Keen feel just a little bit disgusted. He, John, had said simple prayers over thousands of graves out there in France; there had been no crowd of notables, no one to send flowers, just a hole in the ground, a few simple words and the earth had hidden from view the bodies of brave lads—sons, husbands and sweethearts.

The vicar dismissed his staff, first of all extending a hearty invitation to John Keen to stay to lunch. John, however, refused as he had to arrange about some place of abode. Dicky Morse said good-bye at the gate as he was going in the opposite direction, so John and Frank Greymarsh were left together.

"Well, my dear old chap," said Frank, "I really am delighted to see you again. It brings back very vividly memories of the Cambridge days. I should be so glad if you will dine with me this evening and chat over old times."

John expressed his pleasure of seeing Frank that evening and readily accepted the invitation of his old college chum. They then parted, John

to search for rooms, and Frank to wander at his leisure towards his home.

John decided to forego the underground railway and walk across the park towards Kensington, the neighborhood in which he desired to get lodgings. The day was really so pleasant he thought, that it seemed almost a sin to shut one's self underground, when health and strength gave a person the opportunity to walk. John had just entered Hyde Park when his attention was drawn to a girl seated under some trees. Her figure seemed so familiar that he walked slowly by and gave a half glance in her direction, and then raising his hat made way to her side.

"My dear Miss Hinton, I am more than delighted at seeing you again."

Margaret Hinton gave him her hand with a welcoming smile. They had been very old friends in France where Margaret had given her services gratis, and many a soldier boy had listened to her pretty voice as she had sung them songs of sweet memories. Margaret was a professional singer and earned a livelihood by singing at drawing-room functions, and at this particular time was in her zenith. She was practically engaged up to Christmas at a figure that would be the envy of her colleagues.

Chatting over the days in France made the time pass so quickly that John was astounded to find that it was almost midday and remembering that he had to be present at the funeral that afternoon he begged to be excused. Margaret again shook hands warmly with John, and watched him as he hastily made his way across the park. There was a very happy little smile

on her face. Margaret had seen a good deal of him in France and she had hoped that some day he would ask her to marry him. She realized that John liked her immensely and prayed that the day she longed for would soon come; but that day seemed a long way off for she knew that John would never open his lips on the subject dearest to her heart until he had made good in his profession; and that was not so easy, for in spite of the fact that John was nephew to a Baronet, he had no expectations. In fact, as Margaret knew only too well, John had only his stipend, and the pay of an English Curate is barely sufficient to buy the common necessities of life.

Margaret herself was an orphan brought up by some friends of her mother, who had died giving her birth. At the age of eighteen Margaret discovered that she could sing, and it was not very long before others found out the same thing. Lady Wandemere of the village where Margaret lived invited her to sing at a garden festival, and Margaret had won a storm of applause. Lady Wandemere immediately came to the conclusion that Margaret should be trained and had her sent to London where she soon became such a sweet singer that her services were greatly in demand. At the outbreak of the war, Margaret, like many other noble women, gladly spent her time singing to the troops. On her return to London she was heartily welcomed back in her profession and found no lack of engagements.

Margaret was just an ordinary type of English girl, about five feet six inches in height, with medium brown hair. She had grey eyes which,

when you came to look at her closely spoke very plainly of her sweet nature. Margaret looked her best, however, when she smiled. She had one of the sweetest smiles in the world, and by nature she was shy and retiring, gentle and unselfish. She had an apartment in Kensington and lived there in company with a gentlewoman who had fallen on hard times and was only too glad to eke out a respectable livelihood by acting as chaperon to Miss Hinton.

When John left Margaret he made his way to an address he had seen in the morning paper advertising furnished apartments. It fortunately happened that the rooms in question just suited John and he immediately engaged them indefinitely and telephoned to the station for his baggage to be sent on at once. He then proceeded to find a restaurant and having lunched, he returned to his rooms.

His luggage having arrived he put together his surplice and cassock and set out for St. Martha's where the first part of the funeral service was to be held.

John had known George, now Lord Bitterne, for they had been chums together at Cambridge, and he felt very sorry for the ordeal that George would presently undergo.

St. Martha's of course was crowded. Society came just as readily to a funeral as they would to a wedding. Not that they cared whether death had deprived a son of a father. It simply happened to be fashionable—that was all. They would see their names in the paper the next morning and as everybody knows, society simply must be brought into the lime light; else what would be the use of

spending money on dress, balls, and parties, if the world were kept in ignorance of the fact. So an occasion of this sort was as welcome as the flowers in May.

John met Frank and Dicky in the vestry. Frank had a look of indifference on his face which upset John a little, for Frank had known George at Cambridge and as far as he knew they had been fairly good friends. Later on John knew that it was not indifference or lack of sympathy with George that Frank seemed so bored. As for little Dicky, he seemed so amazed at being there at all that John almost smiled.

The vicar now made his appearance and after asking the usual blessing, they filed into the church.

IV

The funeral of Lord Bitterne was over and the intimate friends of the family were assembled in the library of his home in Park Lane anxiously watching the fussy little gentleman at the end of the table. At his right was seated the new Lord Bitterne who with the remainder present would hear the family solicitor read the late Lord Bitterne's will. Mr. Rider, of Rider and Puppet, now rose to his feet and proceeded to break the seal.

"Your Lordship, ladies and gentlemen, this is the last will and testament of Edward Henry Langley, Baron of Bitterne, situated in the county of Hants. This will is dated June twenty-eighth, just two days before his Lordship passed away. I will now proceed to read it to you."

He read it through slowly. With the exception of a few bequests to various charitable organizations, the whole of the estate was to be divided equally between his faithful, loving and cruelly treated wife, Nancy, Lady Bitterne, and his affectionate son, George.

Lord Bitterne sprang to his feet with a cry of pain. "For God's sake, Mr. Rider, tell me where is my mother? Is this all a joke? Why, my father told me she was dead. What does it all mean?"

Mr. Rider gently forced George into his chair. "I have a letter for you, my Lord, which your father dictated at the time he signed his will. I

herewith hand it to you to peruse at your leisure. I am sorry to say that I am afraid it will cause you pain but I earnestly trust that you will endeavor to carry out the wishes you will find expressed in this letter." Then placing a hand gently on the boy's shoulder he said, "I have known you since you were born and if I can be of any assistance in helping you carry out your intentions, I shall be very happy to do so, then bidding goodbye to the company present, he left the house.

Still clasping the letter he had received from Mr. Rider, Lord Bitterne quietly thanked those present in the name of his father for their kindly sympathy and begging to be excused he left the room. When he had left, tongues were speedily loosened and a murmur of surprise was heard on every side. Gratification, too, showed itself, for this will they had just heard read would supply the demand for sensation for some days to come.

Lord Bitterne went direct to his room and sitting down at his desk proceeded to open and read his father's letter.

My dear Son:

I have not been all that a father might have been to you, but I tried to do my best and bring you up to face the world with a clean record. I will not reproach you now for your misdeeds except to say that I am extremely thankful you have made no serious mistakes. With my farewell, I bid you for the sake of your dear Mother, try always to play the game.

My son, I made a mistake when you were only three years of age, and how bitterly I have regretted it only God knows. In a fit of mad jealousy and temper I accused your sweet sainted Mother of a crime to which her nature was entirely foreign, and

drove her forth into the streets to live or die. God forgive me, my son, and I pray that as the years roll by you too may forgive me.

Find your Mother and try to make her life happy and bright. She was as true and as pure as anyone could possibly be.

Then followed a short description of the fateful night.

Lord Bitterne was now sobbing like a child. His mother, his own dear mother! Find her? Yes, he would find her if she were still alive. As for his father, George at that moment hated him. He paced restlessly up and down his room filled with a bitter remorse. If only he had known before. How he had longed to feel a mother's arms around his neck; how different life would have been, but now he would find her—and then a clean straight life for him. Little did he know of his own weakness.

John had promised to dine with Frank Grey-marsh that evening, and at the appointed time he made his way to Portland Place where Frank had an apartment. John was very warmly welcomed by his old friend and they sat down to a splendid dinner. After dinner they retired to the study and seated themselves in two very comfortable chairs, Frank lit a cigar while John proceeded to fill a much-worn briar pipe. John was astonished at the luxuriousness of Frank's apartment until he remembered that Frank himself had an income of nearly two thousand pounds a year.

"Well," said Frank, "what do you think of our vicar?"

"I am afraid," replied John, smiling, "that it

would be almost impossible for me to pass an opinion on such a short acquaintance."

"True, I forgot that you have only just arrived," said Frank, "but my dear John, if you intend to live a life following after the teaching of Christ, leave St. Martha's at once."

John slowly placed his pipe in the ash tray and gazed at Frank in astonishment. "Leave St. Martha's," said John, "why do you think I wear the cloth? For amusement?"

"No," said Frank, "I know you, my dear chap. You see—you were called, I was chosen. In other words, you are a minister of the Gospel because you intend trying to serve Christ according to His teachings. I am here simply and solely for the reason that my pater insisted that I should don the cloth. I never cared a two-penny hang about the Church. As far as I am concerned, I do not mind if I never enter another church in my life except to get married or buried."

John arose to his feet with a cry of amazement. "Why Frank, do you mean to tell me that you have simply taken up the work of God as a pastime?"

"No," replied Frank, "thank God for that. I honour God, John, almost as much as you do, but I have seen so much hypocrisy and heard so much cant under cover of the so-called Church, that I am ashamed and disgusted. Take Stone, for instance, a pecksniffian, swinish old hypocrite of the first degree. Wait just one month if you will, and at the end of that time if I am still with you come and candidly tell me what you think, first of our cloth and then of the parasites which inhabit God's temple Sunday after Sunday. I

never wanted to enter the Church as I have already told you. Father, however, insisted and to please the dear old chap whom I love very dearly, I consented. Personally I want to be a mining engineer. My father has many interests out there in America. That is where I want to go, John, to live in the open, breathing fresh air not stifled in the drawing rooms of a lot of useless humanity. Father is getting old now and he is fretting about his property in America. Mother, of course, is on my side and she has hinted very plainly that father may write and ask me to suspend my church work temporarily and cross the Atlantic for him. That means finis, my dear John, as far as the cloth is concerned. Listen, John, you knew Hatton at Cambridge, you remember what a licentious brute he was? Today he is in the Church. You knew Thorday, Marcus, Dedgy, More? All in the Church my dear fellow, and Sunday after Sunday they preach Christ or at least a semblance of Christ, while the rest of the week they live almost as sinfully as they did at Cambridge. Do you know why? Simply because they found that they were useless in any other station of life; so to live they took orders.

Poor John seemed dumbfounded. "Why, Frank dear boy, I can hardly believe so ill of the Church as that. Even take it for granted that some are living under false colors, surely you will not condemn the whole."

"My dear John, if all men were as godly as you, there would be very little sin in the world," said Frank. "You, John, were called and gladly answered that call to devote your life to the service of humanity. I have not spoken like this

to discourage you, John, but because I should like to think that you were starting your work here without a handicap. Well, let us change the subject; only bear in mind, John, what I have said."

"It is awfully good of you to advise," replied John, "and I surely appreciate your kindly thoughts towards me, and I will earnestly pray that you have been mistaken in your views. By the way Frank, I can't help thinking what a pity it is that Lord Bitterne made so many bad slips at college. His face today struck me as being particularly sad and wistful. I am sure that there is a lot of good in him somewhere."

"Maybe," said Frank, "and if there is, I hope that you will find it. I like Bitterne very much. Apart from his mad infatuation for doubtful women I really don't think that there is a great deal of harm in him. Look him up sometimes, John, he has missed what you and I will always treasure, a mother's love. You know the story, don't you?"

John bowed in answer.

"Did you know, John, why his father sent him out to America?"

"No," said John, "I was away from London at the time."

"Here are the facts," said Frank; "George fell madly in love, or appeared to do so, with a very pretty little chorus girl by the name of Mary Richards, and I want to say that Miss Richards is as pure as she is pretty. Of course I believe George really cared for her, but in deference to his father's wishes, he took the trip to America. Miss Richards refused to consider herself

bound to him in any shape or form ; in fact I honestly believe that although she thought a great deal of George she realized that her social position was a handicap, don't you know, and out of consideration for him practically broke off their friendship. Within these last few months, however, Miss Richards has suddenly gone to the top of her profession and is now leading lady at the Gaiety and you will find her being well received everywhere."

"Then," said John, "let us hope that Bitterne will prove himself worthy of such a good woman. I shall certainly look him up and I trust that he will yet vindicate his character. It has not been very nice looking, as you say, but I never judge a man, Frank, if I can possibly help it. I realize my own deficiencies only too well."

The hour being fairly late they parted with a cordial handshake and many expressions of thanks from John for his delightful welcome. John did not see Frank again for some months, for the next morning Frank's dearest wish came true. He was asked by his father to go out to America, and that meant for Frank, goodbye forever, to the Church.

V

John Keen walked home thinking deeply over all Frank had told him. To him, John, it seemed almost incredible that the Church of Christ was being used just for the sake of a livelihood. He earnestly hoped that Frank was mistaken. John loved the Church and all that it stood for, and his heart felt very heavy when he thought of the possibility of corruption laying low his idol.

John's optimism, however, as usual, helped to banish all sad thoughts, and he was feeling almost cheerful again by the time he reached Kensington. It was past midnight, nevertheless autos still rolled merrily by.

A taxi passed by just before he reached his apartment house and a young girl sprang out, and then proceeded to assist her companion, a somewhat elderly female; in coming up to them, to John's astonishment and delight, he recognized in the young lady, Miss Hinton. Their recognition was mutual, and Margaret laughingly held out her hand.

"Why," said John, "do you live in the neighborhood?"

"Certainly," replied Margaret, "we live at number fourteen."

In that case, said John, we shall indeed be very near neighbors, which will give me great pleasure. I rushed away so hastily today that I forgot to ask your address although I know that it would be a very easy matter to ascertain the whereabouts of London's most popular singer."

Margaret blushed at his words, for she felt far

more embarrassed at receiving praise from him than from anybody else.

"I will say goodnight," said John, raising his hat, "I will not keep you as the hour is late. May I call sometime?"

Margaret replied that she would be pleased to see him again and they parted. John went to his rooms overflowing with happiness. All else was forgotten, for when he thought of Margaret the world was lost. John's dreams were filled with the woman he loved and yet he dared not mention his feelings to her but he lived in hope that some day the door would open that would lead him to Margaret.

And Margaret sat before her dressing-table her head resting between her hands wistfully gazing at the pictures she conjured up in her dreams. Pictures sacred to her heart, John, herself as his wife, perhaps a child; God grant that all the beautiful, sweet, pure, dreams of maidenhood may always come true.

John rose fairly early in the morning and after breakfasting decided to see his vicar and arrange about some parish work. He wanted to get in harness as quickly as possible, for he was no sluggard. As usual he made his way on foot and it was nearly ten o'clock before he reached Regents Park.

The portly butler who answered the door showed John to the library and after waiting some few minutes the Reverend Robert came into the room.

"My dear boy, I am glad that you called. My wife and I were speaking about you at breakfast—by the way, have you had breakfast?"

John smilingly replied in the affirmative.

"Oh!" said the Vicar, "you rise very early; but you see my dear boy I work very hard, the strenuous life

will tell on one's physique these days. I find it almost impossible to rise before nine in the morning."

The Vicar, like many others of his kind, honestly believed that he was a very hard working man. After the funeral of yesterday he had gone direct to his club where he played bridge steadily until two in the morning. Had John known this, he would have been horrified. To perform a funeral service and then go straight to a gambling den! For after all there are very few clubs in London that do not come directly under this appellation.

"Yes, my boy, I am glad you called," continued the Vicar, "first, I want you to meet Mrs. Stone and then I want you to visit some people for me. They have just arrived from America and have taken a furnished house in Mayfair; at least the lady has, the man I believe is just a friend who is a guest for a week or two."

John murmured his delight at being able to be of service to his vicar and the Reverend Stone conducted him to meet Mrs. Stone. She was sitting in her boudoir and languidly rose and extended her hand as John came into the room. "I am sure, Mr. Keen, we are glad to welcome you, we really have had such trouble in getting a suitable successor."

John, in his simple way, wondered why, for he knew hundreds of splendid men who had been waiting for a curacy for some months.

"My dear," said the Vicar, turning to his wife, "I am going to send our new colleague to call on those American people—a Mrs. Cochrane, I believe."

"I hear," said Mrs. Stone, "that she is enormously rich, which is only usual with American people."

Poor John hated to discuss the wealthy side of his parishioner's life, and hastily disclaimed any knowledge

of them. "For you see," said John, "I am so very new to London that I scarcely know a dozen people."

"Don't worry about that," said Mrs. Stone, "you will soon make a host of friends now, Mr. Keen; fortunately you belong to the parish where the very best people reside."

John, having obtained the address of Mrs. Cochrane, shook hands and departed, not however until he had received instructions from Mrs. Stone to the effect that he was to let Mrs. Cochrane know that Sir Richard Keen was his uncle. He left the house in a pensive mood. He was beginning to feel bitterly disappointed in the Vicar. His bumpitiousness, and the pride in which he spoke of the celebrities made John feel ashamed of him. Was Frank Greymarsh right? "God forbid!" thought John, "I am already beginning to judge my fellow men and this will never do." He managed to assume a more cheerful disposition by the time he reached Mayfair.

Mrs. Cochrane, acting on the advice of Steven Hargraves, had taken a furnished house with the distinct understanding that Steven was to be her guest. "I shall feel that lost if you don't just help me, Steve"; and Steven had been only too glad to come to her rescue. Steven knew full well that Mrs. Cochrane, in spite of her wealth, would come in for a good deal of criticism and he resolved for the sake of his country-woman, that he would endeavor to be of as much assistance as possible. The house happened to be for rent immediately and the agents soon found them a married couple and a maid who would do the necessary work. Mrs. Cochrane's idea had been to entertain on a lavish scale, but acting under Steven's advice she decided that she would wait a few months before attempting anything of this nature.

On the passage over, Lord Bitterne had been thrown a good deal into her society, and she had amused him greatly by her ready witticisms and cheerful good nature. He had promised to introduce her to many of his friends, and Mrs. Cochrane had beamed with delight when he informed her that her desire to meet a real Duchess should be realized. One thing, however, Mrs. Cochrane had noticed, and that was that Lord Bitterne seemed to spend the greater part of his time flirting. She had caught him kissing the stewardess one morning, and the same evening she had seen him leaning over the ship's side, with his arm around the waist of a married lady. To say that Mrs. Cochrane was shocked was putting it mildly. "I guess that guy sure is love-sick, Steve, anybody would think that he was a blue-beard."

Steven confidently told Mrs. Cochrane something of George's history. "I honestly don't think that he means any harm, Mrs. Cochrane. One day he will get married; just now the boy never seems happy unless he can run around with a girl."

"Well! it beats me," said Mrs. Cochrane, "how a young fellow like that, and him a Lord now, should want any practice. He only heard by wireless two days ago that his father was dead. Land sakes alive, boy, where's his heart?"

Steven excused his friend on the grounds that he was simply trying to forget his sorrow; but deep down in his heart he was a little bit ashamed of George's actions.

On arriving at Mayfair, John Keen was shown directly into the presence of Mrs. Cochrane and Steven Hargraves.

"Good morning," said John, "I have called to welcome you to London and in the name of the Reverend

Robert Stone, Vicar of St. Martha's, which is in this diocese, offer you any assistance that you may require."

"Now, that's real good of you, Mr. Keen, I don't hanker much after parsons myself but I guess you mean well."

Steven who had been looking steadily at John now asked him, "Mr. Keen, weren't you in France?"

"Indeed I was," said John.

"Then shake hands," said Steven, "I have seen you many times over there and I can honestly say the men you came in contact with thought a great deal of you."

"Steve, is this the parson you were telling me about, who used to sit night and day by the boys when they were bad off?" said Mrs. Cochrane.

"Yes," said Steven, "this is the padre I spoke so much about."

Mrs. Cochrane, in her impulsive way, walked up to John and throwing her arms around his neck kissed him soundly on the cheek.

"My boy died when he was only five years old," sobbed Mrs. Cochrane, "but I know if he had lived and had been out in that mess over in France, you would perhaps have been kind to him also. I am trying to thank you," said Mrs. Cochrane, "in the name of the mothers in America who never saw their boys come back." When Mrs. Cochrane resumed her seat, John found two great tears slowly falling down his cheeks. In that brief moment he knew that he had met one woman in a thousand, and his heart warmed towards her.

They chatted pleasantly for an hour or so and John thought the Americanisms of Mrs. Cochrane the most pleasant and delightful things he had heard for many a day. Both Mrs. Cochrane and Steven promised to attend St. Martha's while they were in London.

On John arising to depart, Steven intimated that he would walk part of the way with him.

"Mr. Keen," said Steven, when they had left the house, "I believe that I heard George, Lord Bitterne you know, say that you and he were friends. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied John, "Lord Bitterne and I were at Cambridge together and we spent a good deal of time in each other's society."

"Well then tell me, Mr. Keen, what sort of a boy was George at college?"

John gave a short description of Lord Bitterne as he had known him, and as really the only good thing he had known of Lord Bitterne was his generous nature, he dwelt at some length on it.

"Sure," said Steven, "I know that he is generous enough, but Mr. Keen, I want to tell you this. If George does not look after himself he is going to become a degenerate."

John felt pained at Steven's words, which he knew only too well were unfortunately true. Steven gave John a brief outline of George's career while in New York and how he had tried, first by persuasion, and finally by letting him have all the rope he needed in ultimate hope that he would speedily grow sick of fast living. "And I just want to tell you, Mr. Keen, that George is not making any progress in the right direction. I am very fond of him, and if you could use your influence to help him cultivate a little self-control, believe me, I should be extremely grateful."

John willingly promised and they parted.

"Well," thought John, "today I have met two of the most delightful people I have ever seen, with the exception of Margaret; first a wonderful American woman, God bless her! second, a splendid type of

American manhood in Mr. Hargraves." Just at that particular moment John very much wanted to go to America; for it seemed to him a country of that genuine love and chivalry which is so rarely found nowadays.

VI

Lord Bitterne sat alone in his spacious and well-furnished study. His figure had lost some of that dissipated look which formerly held predominance. A week had passed since the burial of his father, and young Lord Bitterne had shut himself practically away from everybody.

It had been a very bitter week for him. He had read his father's letter over and over again. In his father's desk he had found a photograph of a very pretty girl, and his heart had told him that it was a picture of his mother. The face was all that he could have desired for the gentle eyes and soft mouth spoke so vividly of the love and affection of her nature.

Lord Bitterne had written to Mr. Rider and he was expecting him to call. He felt sure that Mr. Rider knew the whole sad story, and he was anxious to hear for himself how his father could have been so cruel and unjust.

Mr. Rider was announced, and Lord Bitterne, after shaking hands, bade him be seated.

"Mr. Rider," began his Lordship, "you will no doubt understand my feelings and realize a little of my sufferings during the past week. I want very much to hear from you the whole truth regarding the disappearance of my mother and then I want to take steps to find her. Half of the estate which my father left to me you may spend freely, if necessary, to find some trace of my mother." Here Lord Bitterne buried his face in his hands.

Mr. Rider then gently and quietly told the story of

how Lady Bitterne had been accused without any cause whatever. How she had been driven forth from her home with hardly a penny to her name. Mr. Rider did not spare the late Lord Bitterne, and as the bitter truth slowly forced its way into the boy's mind, he sobbed like a child.

"I may tell you now quite candidly that your father, a few weeks after her Ladyship left, became quite convinced of his error. It may seem a strange thing to say, but your father had a good deal of affection for your mother, and when I tell you that he spent nearly fifteen thousand pounds in about two years trying to find Lady Bitterne, you must recognize the genuineness of his efforts. Nothing ever came of them I regret to say, and your father was forced to believe that Lady Bitterne could not forgive him, and would always remain in hiding. However, if your Lordship wishes we will again take up the search. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be able to find some trace of your mother."

Lord Bitterne thanked him and again told him to spare no expense. "If only we can find out if she is still alive," said Lord Bitterne, "I shall rest content all my days in looking after my mother."

Mr. Rider quietly bowed himself out of the room and returned to his office.

Now it so happened that John Keen, during a morning walk, found himself in Park Lane, and suddenly remembered his promise to Steven Hargraves to look up Lord Bitterne. John therefore made his way up the stone steps and rang the bell. The butler who took his card gave him to understand that so far Lord Bitterne had not been receiving, but he would see if his Lordship would be at home today.

Lord Bitterne seemed pleased at receiving John's

card, and immediately gave orders for him to be shown in. John was astonished at Lord Bitterne's appearance. He could only recall the memory of a youthful, boyish face full of smiles, but the man he saw was old looking and sad.

"My dear Keen, I am sure that it is awfully good of you to call. I am so fearfully in the blues today that I am heartily glad to see you. You were always such a pleasant fellow at Cambridge that I feel sure that you are going to do me good."

"If I can be of any assistance to your Lordship whatsoever," replied John, "nothing will give me greater pleasure."

"Well, John, there is one thing you can do at the onset, please call me Bitterne. I can assure you that it gives me little pleasure to be Lorded."

John gave his usual kind smile, and after offering his sympathy he asked Lord Bitterne if he had any plans for the future.

"The future," said Lord Bitterne, "does not seem very bright to me. I do not mean my father, you know John, but that dear lady who should be here now, my mother." Without waiting to ask John whether he knew, George proceeded to tell him the story as he had just heard it. "John, old chap, you were liked by everybody at college. Many a time you have given me advice which I regret to say I never followed. What would you do now if you were in my place?"

John sat thoughtfully for a few moments. To him there were two things that made a man supremely happy and in a sense they were almost synonymous. First, trust in God. Second, love of a good woman.

"Bitterne, I am not much of a comforter," said John, "and what I am going to say now may not give you the relief that I feel your heart needs, but it all

depends on you. In the first place remember that your dear mother was a sweet, sainted woman, and if she is no more, remember that in the world she is gone to there is no pain or sorrow, but just perfect happiness and contentment. In the second place if (and for your sake dear lad God grant it may be so) she is alive, you will have a bright and happy future before you in making amends for your father's sad mistake. There is one other thing, Bitterne, and that is just this; try to live the life you think that your mother would like you to lead. Some day, and perhaps nearer than you anticipate, there is a sweet souled woman whom you will ask to share your life; and Bitterne remember this, try never to forget it, when you ask this woman to share your future happiness you will expect her to be unblemished. Keep yourself true so that you may go to her without the knowledge of a guilty and sinful past."

John was speaking very earnestly, pleading almost. He thought that the opportunity was never better than at that present moment; for when the soul is sad good resolutions very easily take root. Lord Bitterne had bowed his head when John commenced speaking, and a surge of shame came over him when he thought of the life he had lived.

"I am afraid, John, that it is a little too late, I am already soiled," said George, "but I tell you I honestly will try for the sake of the girl that is to come, to live decently. You make me feel a better man already," said Lord Bitterne suddenly springing to his feet. "Why, John, it seems like old days."

John felt wonderfully happy to see the smile on his friend's face, and in his heart he offered a silent prayer for the future of Lord Bitterne.

"By the way," said John, "I met two very won-

derful people on Thursday, whom you know very well, a Mrs. Cochrane and a Mr. Hargraves."

"Then let me tell you," said George, "that you have indeed been fortunate in meeting them. Steven is the dearest fellow in the world, and Mrs. Cochrane is as kind as she is unconventional."

"I have already found that out," said John, "although I should hesitate before I called Mrs. Cochrane unconventional."

"Yes, you are right, John, but you see I meant that she makes such delightful conversational errors that I cannot help calling her that."

John smiled at the serious way in which Lord Bitterne tried to apologize but realized his sincerity, for he knew that George was at heart a gentleman and would not wittingly give offense.

"I must ask them to call," said George. "Do you think it would be right for me to entertain people just yet?"

"Yes," replied John, "I certainly would not keep myself shut up day after day. Go out, my dear Bitterne, and mix with people. Feel something of the joy of living."

"You are right, John, I never thought of that. I will try to banish all thoughts of sadness and just look forward to the future. Now, old man, when should I entertain again? Forgive me if I bore you but I really feel the need of a little advice, and this time I shall take it."

"I should think that in about three weeks from now you could, without fear of censure, give an informal party," replied John. "By the way, I don't presume to teach you etiquette, but of course you know that it will be necessary to have a hostess."

"Don't worry about that part of it, John, for to-

morrow my aunt, Lady Vermont, is coming to spend some months, and she will act in that capacity. Now I want you to come and see me very often. I appreciate your friendship very much. I never thought that I could feel so much better. God bless you, John. Now promise me; the first party I give, you will come. I know that affairs of this kind are hardly in your line, but for the sake of old days."

John promised that he would be present and George gave him a grip of the hand that made him wince.

"I hear that you are at St. Martha's, and for once I am in a position to give you a little advice, to wit: if you want to stay in this parish, nurse your congregation," said George.

"What in the world do you mean?" said John smiling in spite of himself at Lord Bitterne's words.

"I mean just this, that although you have perhaps one of the most aristocratic congregations in England, you also have one of the most God-forsaken crowds that ever profaned a church. You see, John, I know the vast majority only too well. Your Vicar is a lazy, useless nonentity who spends nearly all his time at the club sampling champagne and playing bridge, and although it is not good form to talk about a lady behind her back, I want to tell you that Mrs. Stone is the greatest scoundrel in Europe. She has loads of money, and every time you see a man or woman drunk in the streets, you may safely say that the poor wretches have just deposited their cash to the credit of Mrs. Stone. She practically owns the public houses of the lowest possible type. She does not give a penny-piece to charity. She is mean, vulgar, illiterate and snobbish. My dear John, your Vicar and his good lady represent the type you may expect to find in your congregation, so when I say nurse them; by that I

mean, don't ever ruffle their feathers. Never tell them the story of Dives and Lazarus, but rather let them think that they are just the thing."

Poor John, how he had built his hopes on this appointment. Then first Greymarsh, and now Lord Bitterne were shattering all his ideals.

"Bitterne," said John, "I want to tell you now that in the name of the Christ I profess to serve, if there is any hypocrisy in the Church of God, I will expose it. If what you say of Stone is true he must leave the Church. As for my nursing my congregation, I shall never do that. I shall preach the gospel from the beginning to the end, even if it means that I have to leave St. Martha's; aye even if I have to give up the cloth; for I want to be a man to live among men, and I cannot stay in the Church if she is corrupt."

"Well done," said Lord Bitterne, "go after them old chap, I will back you for all I am worth, and if you should feel compelled to give up the game, rest assured that there are other fields open to you. Well goodbye, John, thanks a thousand times for calling."

John walked home with a sad heart.

VII

To the average American the West End of London means refinement, stately mansions, and well-paved roads. Nevertheless there are filthy slums tucked away as it were, right at the back doors of the homes of magnates.

Within a very short distance of Park Lane there is a series of narrow passages, filled day and night with crying, screaming, ragged children, slatternly women and drunken men. The public houses at the respective ends of these passages are patronized by the unfortunate wretches who are condemned to live in Cross Keys Passages.

As this district was directly in the diocese of St. Martha's it is only natural to suppose that Cross Keys was well patronized by the Reverend Robert Stone and his satellites. As a matter of fact, as far as the officers of St. Martha's were concerned Cross Keys did not exist. The residents had been so long untroubled by seekers of lost souls that a wave of astonishment swept through the narrow passages, when a poor, frail-looking gentleman in clergyman's attire was seen to enter.

Poor little Dicky Morse had made up his mind that he was not doing his duty and had resolved that he would give a portion of his time to Cross Keys. Sitting on a doorstep in rags and tatters with her hair unkempt and dirty, was what might have been the figure of a buxom woman. The Reverend Dicky politely raising his hat approached her and tried to start some sort of conversation.

Dicky felt very nervous. A group of lounging men and women were gathering around to see the fun. The woman raised her drink-sodden face to Dicky and asked him what the " 'ell" he wanted, "why couldn't 'e let a woman 'av 'er bloomin' nap," and to the shocked and horrified Dicky, rose unsteadily to her feet and approaching flung her arms around his neck and with the beery tears running down her cheeks inquired, "Why didn't yer come 'ome before, old son? Leave me would yer? 'Ere! 'ow abaht that kid of yourn? Never mind old duck, slip me a bob and I'll forgive yer."

Dicky was rescued by a fat policeman who had watched the whole proceedings from near by and had had the nearest approach to apoplexy possible. His huge form was still quivering with merriment as he separated Cross Keys Sal from Dicky Morse and led that gentleman away.

"Lord bless yer sir, yer don't want to waste yer time dahn 'ere. They is too far gone to want a parson. Why, if I 'adn't been 'ere they'd taken the clothes off yer back."

The terrified Dicky was only too thankful to get out of the district as quickly as possible, and that ended visiting slums for the Reverend Richard Morse.

What was the surprise then of the Cross Keys community to see a few weeks afterward another "blooming" sky-pilot in their midst. This time it was no weakling, however, for John Keen was a finely built man. He had heard how poor little Dicky had been received, and in spite of his sympathy with his colleague, John had laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks while poor little Dicky's amazement only tended to make his laugh the heartier.

John intended not only visiting Cross Keys, but also

making friends there. The populace eyed him with a good deal of suspicion and very audible remarks condemning his eyesight and nose told John very plainly that he had no very easy task before him.

A fortunate thing now happened for John. A man had just come to the doorway of the Bull, pint-pot in hand. Bill Booze as they called him, on account of his intimate association with the ingredients that made up his nick-name, had been hastily summoned by the landlord to see the blinkin' church-robber. As one may guess, landlords, especially of public houses in districts such as these, had no very great love for the higher life.

To the landlord's surprise and indignation, Bill no sooner caught sight of John, than waving his pint-pot to the disadvantage of its contents he ran up to him. "Blimey mates! it's the Heaven chucker wot was wif us in the trenches. How'r yer, sir?"

John heartily shook hands with Bill. "And how are you getting on now," asked John, "not taking to drink again are you?" looking steadily at the pewter pot.

"W'y, fawncy yer askin' me that nah. No sir, I ain't exactly taken ter drink; as a matter of fact I don't like it but just a little nah and then. Doctor's orders, sir, for me wound."

Bill was just starting on his fifteenth pint for the day when John appeared.

"Well," said John, "I want you to remember what you promised me in France. You were very near death there William."

Bill hung his head in a shamefaced way. "Yer right, Captain, I must knock off the booze."

"Give me your hand on that, William."

One of the crowd now jeeringly made illusion to the fact that Bill had sold his mates to a Bible

Thumper. Off came Bill's coat in a minute. "W'y, yer blasted lot of Gawd-forsaken swine, I'll kick 'ell out of the 'ole bleedin' crowd," said Bill. "Don't I know this 'ere bloke and don't pretty near all of us know him? Why, aht there in Frawnce this 'ere bloke was the best friend we ever 'ad."

Two more of the audience who had come into contact with John now came forward and shook hands with a sheepish grin.

"Don't you mind this 'ere crowd, sir, its only the scrapin's of 'ell, sir; they ain't been dragged up like you and me sir."

John felt that he was indeed getting on famously. "Thank you boys, very much. Friends, I may tell you that I have just come to live in your neighborhood and I intend making myself your friend. I shall call often, and when you feel that you want help, as your parson, I want you to let me help you."

"Nah yer giving it 'em," said Bill.

The audience seemed very much impressed with John's words, and some, disappointed that there would be no fun, drifted back to the saloon and engaged in the more popular pastime of emptying mugs.

"William, I want you to introduce me to your friends here," said John, "and remember you must from now on be my batman when I am on duty in this district."

Bill faithfully promised that he would always be in attendance. "Nah, sir, suppose that I first of all introduce yer to Gentleman Pete."

"Certainly," said John, "I shall be glad to see him."

"Give way for the parson, men. Come on Captain, this way and mind yer napper." John followed his guide down a narrow passage and up some stairs until they came to a door. Throwing it open, Bill entered and with a bow that would have done credit to Presi-

dent Wilson or William J. Bryan, announced "Cap, the Parson Bloke wot was wif us in France."

A man and woman were seated at the table and they hastily arose as John came into the room. The man quietly offered John a chair while Bill muttering some excuse about getting home to dinner tumbled down the stairs and with a dry feeling round his tongue went back to commence his sixteenth pint.

"My name is Keen, John Keen," said John. The man slightly inclined his head and introduced himself as Peter Morgan, then in turn presented his wife. Both the man and the woman had an air of refinement that was not lost on John, and he wondered.

"I am sure, Mr. Keen, that it is a poor place for you to come into, but I may say both for my wife and myself (here the man cast an affectionate look at the lady), that we have been exceptionally happy during our residence here, it is our home, but at same time we shall not be sorry to leave it."

"Then you are going away?" said John.

"Yes sir, I have been working hard now ever since I left the army and we have saved sufficient to pay our passage to America."

"I must congratulate you both," said John, "for I have a very warm feeling in my heart for that great country, where districts of this sort are practically unknown. I presume you have some trade to follow when you reach America?"

"Well, it is not exactly a trade," said the man, "but I believe I shall get work at it. I am a schoolmaster." John was astonished. His breeding prevented him from questioning as to why a man and woman of evident education should reside in this quarter of London.

The man guessing his thoughts told him how he had

been unable to get an appointment since he left the army. The landlord who owned Cross Keys district had given him free rooms and a few shillings a week to collect the rents each Saturday. As this did not interfere with his regular hours he had also obtained employment as day porter at a West End Hotel where with his tips he had saved sufficient to start for a new world.

John was beginning to see humanity in a different light. He could recognize some of the grim determination which lay at the back of this man's character, and happening to look towards the woman he saw her smiling at her husband with such a look of devotion on her face that John marveled.

"I wish you every success in the world," said John, "and if you are in this neighborhood on Sunday, I should like to see you at church."

Mr. Morgan shook his head. "While I believe in God and in Christ I do not believe in the so-called Church (with apologies to you, sir,) and I have not been inside of one for many years; but I like you, Mr. Keen, you have a genuine ring about you and I believe that after all we may enter your church. Can I have the banns read from St. Martha's?"

"Why yes, certainly," said John with astonishment. "Are some friends of yours to be married?"

"No," said Mr. Morgan, "but we are," and he looked lovingly at the lady.

John was silent. He felt himself placed on the horns of a dilemma, and he waited for Mr. Morgan to speak again.

Peter Morgan noting John's look of bewilderment readily offered to explain why they wished to go through the marriage ceremony.

"You see, Mr. Keen, the story is a very sad one in

some respects ; although, thank God for the past or I might never have had you, dear little girl," said Peter letting his hand rest lovingly on his wife's head. She had turned her face away as though in shame.

"Nine years ago I was a schoolmaster at Taunton. I had been in the town for about two months when I was able to render some service to a lady, my present wife. A drunken brute of a husband was ill-treating her and I managed to rescue her from his blows. She was grateful for my help and when she had left me, a great pity for her came into my heart. She tried everything in her power to save her husband from the drunkard's way, but to no effect, and one night he turned her out of doors and told her to go to hell. As I had chatted with her once or twice she came to me for advice. I helped her to reach London where she obtained work as a domestic servant. Coming to London myself shortly afterwards we saw a great deal of each other. We soon became aware that God had sent us into each other's lives, so we made up our minds to get married. I bought a ring, and one evening taking a bus out into the country we walked across some fields until we came to a fallen tree, and there kneeling down we asked God to make us man and wife ; and if ever God made a marriage he made ours."

"You see, sir," said Mrs. Morgan, "raising her head, we went direct to God himself, and God gave us to each other. All the Church sermons could not make us more married than we are at present. My late husband, he was killed in France, sir, forfeited his right to call me wife and broke his marriage vows. I was free to marry Peter."

"And now," said Peter with a happy smile, "we expect a little stranger one of these days and for legal protection we are going through the marriage service."

John took Mrs. Morgan by the hand and in a husky voice said, "Mrs. Morgan, there are millions of people who would point the finger of scorn at you if they knew your history; but I, knowing it, can only say this—that I hope with all my heart and soul some day I may be as truly married as you." Then turning to Peter he said, "by all means go through the marriage ceremony for the sake of the child which is to come; but from my heart, I can assure you that all the ministers of the gospel in the world could not make your marriage more real than you have made it yourselves."

And John went to rest that night marvelling at the beauty of character revealed to him that day. He did not see Mr. and Mrs. Morgan again for they left London for Liverpool in haste and were married before embarking for America.

VIII

Unmarried daughters and daughters who had been married and unmarried again were plentiful and many. The war had taken a very heavy toll of the world's manhood and mothers were at their wits' end.

The announcement that Lady Vermont had taken up her abode with her nephew Lord Bitterne caused a flutter of expectation. Lord Bitterne, of course, was a great catch and hope ran high in many families that possibly one of their fair daughters would be the lucky one.

Lady Vermont had decided that August 4th should be a house-warming party and was busy issuing invitations to the elect. Lord Bitterne was not consulted on the subject, nevertheless he himself sent invitations to John Keen, Steven Hargraves, Mrs. Cochrane, and Mary Richards; for deep down in his heart he felt that he wanted to renew his friendship with Mary.

This would really be the first society party for Mrs. Cochrane and she intended doing it justice. With her sound wisdom she had placed herself in the hands of a capable dressmaker, consequently in addition to being garbed in the height of fashion, she was also sensibly dressed and no one could possibly find fault with her style which after all in these days of wear all or nothing, was a very wonderful thing.

The evening of the fourth of August saw a large crowd of notables assembled at Park Lane.

A steady stream of cars rolled up to the door, deposited their burdens and departed.

Only one guest arrived on foot and the circumstance being so unusual, the footman almost made up his mind to refuse admittance; but the sight of a clerical collar made all the difference and John Keen was admitted with something of the same pomp and ceremony that had characterized his predecessors.

Lady Vermont gave John a cordial welcome, not from any particular love or affection for John himself, for as far as she was concerned he did not exist, but as the nephew of the probable future prime minister of England, John became a person worth knowing.

There were very few people there that John knew and he was glad to keep as much in the background as possible. Mrs. Stone came into the room in a dress that would have made September Morn blush, one could never reconcile themselves to the fact that she was the vicar's wife, while her husband followed with that bland look of self-importance which had made him obnoxious to many.

The Duke and Duchess of Renton were the next to arrive and after being greeted by Lady Vermont were immediately surrounded by the usual crowd of worshippers. The Duke and Duchess of Renton were typical of the English aristocracy, kind, courteous and, amazing though it may seem, not a bit self-conscious or proud. At their country residence the old Duke would walk abroad and chat with the villagers in the same kindly manner as he did to his equals, and the Duchess had more friends among the mothers

and daughters of Renton village than she had in the whole of London. Neither the Duke or his lady cared much about these receptions, but in a sense of duty accepted an invitation now and then.

With the exception of Mrs. Cochrane and Steven all the guests had arrived and the butler was crazy with anxiety, for the hour of dinner had gone by, when the belated guests were duly announced.

A hush of expectancy fell on the assembled guests as Mrs. Cochrane, followed by Steven, advanced into the room.

"I am sure sorry we are late," said Mrs. Cochrane, "but that big boob of a shover forgot to fill her up with gas and we had to wait until he got her going."

A smile of amusement passed from face to face and the majority immediately came to the conclusion that it was going to be an amusing evening after all.

Lady Vermont now gave the signal and the gong was sounded. Lord Bitterne arranged for the Duke of Renton to take Mrs. Cochrane into dinner, and Mrs. Cochrane on being presented felt very proud.

"You are the first Duke that I have ever met," said Mrs. Cochrane, her homely face beaming with pleasure.

"Then I sincerely hope," replied the gentleman, "that you are not disappointed," and Mrs. Cochrane taking the arm he offered her followed the others into the dining-room.

Mary Richards was assigned to Steven Har-

graves, while John Keen led the charming Mrs. Stone to her seat.

The dinner was a masterpiece of culinary art, and the vicar felt completely in accord with the arrangements which gave such excellent fare.

After the soup had passed conversation became fairly general. Steven had Mary Richards very deeply interested in America and Mary made Steven promise to come to the Gaiety and see her. Occasionally her eyes would wander to Lord Bitterne who was trying to interest an entirely uninteresting little woman who had just written a book on hygienics, and refused to talk on any other subject. As Lord Bitterne's knowledge of the topic was practically nil he was obliged to listen to a multitude of twaddle that would make a policeman yawn.

Mrs. Cochrane, in no way abashed by the brilliant assembly, was very loquacious. The dear old Duke had casually mentioned that he had several good short-horns on his estate, and from then on Mrs. Cochrane told him more about cattle than he had even known in his life before. In fact he was so impressed that he insisted on her coming down the following week and spending a few days, and knowing that Steven Hargraves was a protégé of Mrs. Cochrane included him in the invitation.

Opposite to Mrs. Cochrane sat the Reverend Robert Stone, and Mrs. Cochrane had watched with amazement the efforts of that gentleman to annihilate his food.

After dinner the ladies retired to the drawing-room and the men lit their cigars. The Duke of Renton leaning nearer Steven informed him of his

invitation to Mrs. Cochrane and asked Steven if he could have the pleasure of his company also.

Steven gladly consented; for he had taken a very warm liking to the Duke. The courteous manner in which he had spoken of Steven's own country and the utter absence of reserve appealed to him.

Lord Bitterne now found a few minutes to speak to Steven, as he had barely been able to notice him before.

"Well, Steven, old chap, if I did not know you I should be jealous. Do you know that the little girl that you took into dinner is the only girl in the world that I ever thought anything of?"

Steven smiled back at Lord Bitterne and placing his arm around his shoulders demanded an invitation to the wedding.

"But joking apart, George, I do hope old boy that some day you will really settle down. You owe it to your name and to the generations of Bitternes that are to come, you know."

With something of his old cheerful good nature he assured Steven that if he was not married just yet it was because he loved them all too much.

Lord Bitterne now proposed to join the ladies and they entered the drawing-room. Lady Vermont had engaged the services of Margaret Hinton to sing, and Margaret was coming at half-past ten.

The majority of the guests were anticipating some amusement, for Mrs. Cochrane had been condemning in an audible voice parsons and snobs. The Vicar just happened to be seated by Mrs. Cochrane when she informed a much over-

dressed dame that a parson who drank should give up his job and be a bar-tender.

Leaning forward, the Reverend Robert in his bland voice informed Mrs. Cochrane, "that a little wine for the stomach's sake, according to St. Timothy, was very necessary."

"Now that may be so," replied Mrs. Cochrane, "but there is a lot of difference in giving a cow a drink and taking the poor thing down to the river and pushing her in."

The simile was not lost on the Vicar, who had consumed about enough wine to make any ordinary man hopelessly drunk; but he felt that his reputation as an orator was at stake and immediately commenced a discourse on the use and abuse of drink, when he was brought to a sudden stop by Mrs. Cochrane.

"Mister Vicar, you put me in mind of a guy who came out to our farm one night all dolled up like a parson; he could talk like a gramaphone. We offered to put him up for the night and the way he prayed made us both cry. The next morning when we woke up we found that the parson-fellow had beat it with my husband's boots and two of our best horses."

A roar of laughter greeted Mrs. Cochrane's story and an expectant silence fell on the company as they waited to see the winner of the debate. Poor Stone was just beginning to wonder what he was up against.

"But, my dear madam, surely the action of this man in stealing your property should convince you that he was a fraud masquerading in the uniform of the Church."

"Well, I don't know about that," replied Mrs.

Cochrane. "My poor husband used to say, 'Martha, look out for parsons and rattlers. Both make a noise before they strike, and the parson-fellow generally aims to hit either your wad or your reputation; whichever comes first, he grabs.'"

Oh! the joy depicted on the faces of the assembly. No doubt Mrs. Cochrane would have entertained her audience for a much longer period had not Lady Vermont announced that Miss Hinton would sing.

At the mention of Miss Hinton's name, John Keen hastily turned around and catching sight of Margaret made his way to her side and offered to turn over the music. Margaret thanked him and John escorted her to the piano.

Margaret Hinton was probably one of the sweetest singers in England. On the stage her voice would probably have not been powerful enough to fill the building, but in a drawing-room it was perfect. Many there had heard her before and sudden silence came over the room as she, softly playing the prelude, sang a pretty little French love song. "Parceque je vous aime." Her voice faltered on the lines, "Mais nous devons restez comme nous somme"; for she was singing to John only, and John catching the inflection, felt a little throb in his heart for the words of the song had been his thoughts for many days now. He loved her too much to ask her to share a life of poverty.

Steven was gazing at Margaret as though he had seen a ghost; for she was almost the living image of his own lost sweetheart, while Lord Bitterne was looking at her for an entirely different reason. His mad, passionate nature was

asserting itself, and to Lord Bitterne Margaret seemed very desirable.

A burst of applause followed the conclusion of her song. Margaret now sang "Realization," and when she came to the last verse there were many eyes misty with tears.

And Steven Hargraves had lived again in the song. He could feel those dear soft arms around his neck; he could see those dear grey eyes again and he thanked God that his love for his little girl was as strong as ever.

Again Margaret was encored and replied by singing that old American song that will never die, "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginia." At the conclusion Mrs. Cochrane approached and warmly congratulated Margaret on having such a lovely voice. Of course, according to etiquette Mrs. Cochrane was sadly out of place; but the etiquette of Mrs. Cochrane was equality, and to her all were equal. Margaret then retired and a violinist endeavored to interest the company.

The party was gradually breaking up; for it was almost midnight. After Margaret had left, Lord Bitterne found time to turn his attention to Mary Richards. Mary still loved him and found it very hard to act with sang-froid when he was near by.

"My dear Mary, you treat me like a total stranger," said George, "one would never think that once we were engaged."

"That, of course, my Lord, is a thing of the past," said Mary, "when I was foolish enough to imagine that I could marry you."

"Mary, Mary," said George in a bantering

voice, "why the Lordship; won't you call me George as in the old days?"

"I am afraid, my Lord, that it would not be quite the thing," said Mary smiling.

"Now look here, Mary, you know perfectly well that you care for me more than ever. Now don't you?"

"Your Lordship must be gifted with a wonderful insight," she said, and Lord George cursing inwardly realized that Mary seemed very determined not to allow him to make love to her.

When the last guest had departed Lord Bitterne retired to his room and throwing himself on a couch let his thoughts wander to Margaret Hinton. "What a sweet girl," thought Lord Bitterne, "I must arrange to know her."

IX

The residents of Cross Keys Passages were heartily enjoying themselves. A fight between two of the gentler sex was in progress.

Two ladies with loud voices and bitter invectives had discussed, in a friendly way, of course, the ownership of a certain man. The man in question was a drunken, lazy loafer, whom one would think was best alone; but on this particular day he had by some means got hold of a sovereign, hence his market value rose high in the estimation of the two ladies mentioned.

The man being appealed to, made reply to the effect that it didn't make a damn bit of difference to him and they could both go to hell and fight it out. They readily availed themselves of his kind permission and were trying to tear each other to pieces in a thoroughly business-like way. Mr. William Smith, commonly known as Bill Booze, had mounted on an empty box and was delightedly officiating as referee, and cheerfully encouraged first one and then the other.

The crowd of spectators were at the height of their enjoyment, when suddenly Mr. William Smith spotted the Reverend John Keen entering the Passages. Down jumped William and at the imminent risk of being torn to pieces by the inflamed combatants hastily separated them.

"W'y, yer ought to be ashamed of yerselves; women, too; w'y don't yer go 'ome and scrub yer 'ouses?"

A lady among the spectators remarking in an audible voice that they liked living in a pigsty, almost raised another riot, when John appeared in their midst, and the crowd recognizing that the fight was over for the time being gradually drifted away until only William and the two rivals were left.

"Good morning, sir! I am glad to see yer. Lor' bless yer, sir! the time I 'as 'ere keeping things right. These 'ere two women were carrying on something awful when I came up and stopped 'em," said the hypocritical Bill in a proud voice.

One of the ladies started to tell Bill what she thought of his double dealing when a wink from Bill stopped her. John made both women shake hands and promise that hostilities would not be renewed in his absence and the two damsels first shook hands, and then linked arm in arm went in search of the cause of their argument with the full determination to finish it on his worthy form.

"Now, William, I am very pleased to see you trying to keep order down here. I am sure that it is very creditable of you," said John.

William with a sheepish grin said "'e 'oped 'e knowed his duty. Why, Captain, there is a swell lidy comes dahn 'ere very often and I allus lool'-arter her."

"A lady from the Church, no doubt," said John.

"No, she ain't, Captain. W'y it's that lidy who used to sing to us aht in Frawnce."

"Do you mean Miss Hinton?" said John hastily.

"Yes, that's 'er, Captain, and she is up wif Lizzie Smith this blessed minute."

"Show me where I can find her, William," said John in an anxious voice.

For once in his life John really felt worried. Margaret actually here in one of the worst quarters of London; dear God, she might get insulted, perhaps ill-treated, and he realized more than ever how very much he loved her.

The house, or offal bin, in which lived Lizzie Smith, was soon reached and without wasting any time John entered and found himself in the presence of Margaret, and God knows what!

A filthy heap of old rags in one corner of the room and lying on them what was once a young girl; now a conglomeration of disease, one cheek eaten away and her lips a mass of sores.

"Margaret! for God's sake, come away, dear," said John, forgetting in his emotion that as yet he had no claim on Margaret.

"Hush! Mr. Keen, don't you see that she is dying?"

John bowed his head in shame, and then forgetting everything except that a poor young girl was dying, he crossed over and knelt by her side and spoke to her gently. The girl was too far gone to make answer; but there was a light in her eyes as she noted John's look of sympathy that told of infinite gratitude. John dared not ask her whether she was fit to meet God. He recognized the cruel symptoms and he prayed that the Saviour would take this little sister and comfort her. Margaret came and knelt by the side of John and in her sweet voice sang "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere."

The poor creature lying there dying looked at Margaret in rapture and then in a voice scarcely

a whisper said, "I am so glad that God is taking me home," and then her eyes could not see either Margaret or John for she had passed on.

They knelt there in silent prayer for a few minutes and then arose. Margaret was crying softly and the heart of John Keen almost breaking. John took Margaret by the hand and they left the house; but not before he had brought out a well-worn purse and extracting his last sovereign pressed it into the hands of William and told him to engage a woman to take charge until he could make arrangements for the removal of the body.

They passed through Cross Keys Passages and out into the sunshine again; for no sun ever penetrated Cross Keys Passages.

"Miss Hinton, you must not come down here again," said John, "why, it is too awful for words."

"Mr. Keen, I want to do all I can to help my fallen sisters, and this little girl you have just seen pass into Heaven was once my friend. Six months ago she was, like myself, a society entertainer, until she was cruelly betrayed. The man was married, and to hide her shame, Lizzie, her real name does not matter, gave up her singing and took to drink. The result you have seen. Mr. Keen, why does the woman always suffer?"

John did not answer for awhile; for he realized only too well the truth of Margaret's question, then he said, "Miss Hinton, it is the woman's turn now; but later on it will be her betrayer's turn, and I imagine that God cannot find any punishment great enough for him here; but his time is later, and there will be no mercy."

"Mr. Keen," sobbed Margaret, "why should such awful misery exist in this great rich city? These terrible slums surrounded on every side by luxurious dwellings where, night after night thousands are spent in giving dinners and balls; where night after night married women break their marriage vows with impunity and still live?"

"Hush! hush! Miss Hinton, you don't know what you are saying," said John. "You are overwrought."

But nevertheless John was beginning to understand that what Margaret said was only too true. He had seen things during his short residence in the parish that made his heart ache.

"Do you know, Mr. Keen, that the man who betrayed Lizzie is also the owner of those wretched hovels in Cross Keys? Do you know that he is also a member of your Church? And Sunday after Sunday he will sit in his pew listening to the prayers whilst really his eyes are seeking some pretty face in bestial thoughts."

"For God's sake, Miss Hinton, stop!" cried John, "if this is true tell me his name and I will denounce him openly from the pulpit of the Church."

"Dear Mr. Keen," said Margaret, "I am sorry that I have caused you pain. Later on I will tell you his name; but for the sake of your livelihood please be careful."

"Miss Hinton, I would rather die like a dog in the gutter than be untrue to my manhood; and my heart tells me that I shall very shortly be compelled to leave the Church, although God knows it will almost break my heart."

As they were entering her apartment Margaret felt that she could no longer contain herself.

"John, John, don't talk like that; for if anything happened to you I should die."

John took Margaret by the hand and in a voice broken with emotion said, "Margaret, my little Margaret, I love you, dear, better than anything else in the world. Will you wait, dear, until I can offer you a home?" And the look in Margaret's eyes told John all he wished to know. Then she crept into his arms and shyly lifted her lips to meet his kiss.

X

The knowledge that Mrs. Cochrane was to be a guest at the Duke of Renton's country house made the residents of richer London sit up and take notice, and a flood of invitations poured into the letter box of the Mayfair house, and she and Steven were alluded to in public as "those delightful Americans."

Mrs. Cochrane was just a little bit disappointed with England. She had expected to find a great race of men and women whose motto would be honor and integrity, and unfortunately for her she had only come in contact with a class of rich parasites. True she had met one or two people, including the Duke and Duchess, who exemplified the high ideals which her English friends in America had given her to understand were predominant. But the vast majority, heartless, Godless, living only for themselves. Mrs. Cochrane was disappointed.

"Well, Steve boy, I guess we don't have to leave the good old U. S. A. to find men and women. I thought that when I came over here everybody would be just right glad to see me, being as my forefathers were English; but gee! Steve, I want to go home again. All these funny ways get my goat. Why, yesterday I asked that frizzy-headed woman to come in and have a cup of coffee at a restaurant and she turned up her nose and said, 'I hope I am a lady!' That got me going and I said 'well marm there's nothing like hope. I am an optimist myself.' That didn't seem to please her any so I said, 'goodday' and came home. What she was so sore about I don't know. I admit that the

restaurant wasn't any too classy but I have been in worse, Steve."

Poor Steven did not dare to point out the enormity of her offense in the eyes of these aristocrats; for the restaurant in question happened to be one of the trades-people's rendezvous; but at the same time he did feel ashamed of the lack of good breeding that so far existed in the people who called themselves society.

Mrs. Cochrane was giving a little party that afternoon which consisted of two people only—Margaret Hinton and John Keen.

Margaret was the first to arrive and Mrs. Cochrane greeted her with a warmth of feeling that made Margaret gasp for breath. "Sit right down here, dearie," said Mrs. Cochrane indicating a chair, "and tell me something about this country of yours. I feel like a fish out of water, don't seem to get nowhere."

Margaret could not help smiling at Mrs. Cochrane; for she realized something of the ordeal that the good lady was passing through.

They were soon busy chatting, or at least Mrs. Cochrane was, and Margaret was quite content to listen. The wonderful stories that she heard from Mrs. Cochrane made Margaret want to visit America. Mrs. Cochrane was just telling Margaret a story of a round-up on her ranch when Steven, followed by John Keen, came into the room.

"Please don't let us disturb you," said Steven, "but I happened to meet Mr. Keen outside and we came in together."

John paid his compliments to Mrs. Cochrane and then turned to Margaret and took her outstretched hand. Steven who happened to be standing by John at the time saw the look that passed between them and understood very clearly their relationship. There

was a pang at his heart, for it recalled sweetly-sad memories.

Conversation became general and Mrs. Cochrane became deeply interested in some poor little strayed children, who fortunately had been rescued from death in the nick of time by a kindly policeman. "Do you mean to tell me, my dear," said Mrs. Cochrane, "that children go hungry in a rich city like this? For land's sake! What are your women-folk doing? Don't they ever get out and try to locate these poor little dears instead of letting the police do it? Why, in my country there ain't many starving children, I'll tell the world."

Mrs. Cochrane could not bring herself to imagine for one moment that such a thing as hungry, starving children could possibly exist in a city in which resided some of the wealthiest people in the world.

John Keen asked Mrs. Cochrane whether there were not neglected children in America, and Mrs. Cochrane grew highly indignant at the possibility of any such thing.

"There sure are some folk over there that are content to live like a stray mule; but believe me there ain't any person wanting for a bite to eat."

After all Mrs. Cochrane was quite correct. America has her faults, but starving men and women and especially little children are a rarity in the land of Uncle Sam.

John invited Mrs. Cochrane to visit with him and Mrs. Cochrane expressed her willingness to do so, and said "and say Mr. Keen, if a dollar or so is going to help any, you will find it right here, let me tell you."

John thanked Mrs. Cochrane warmly and a tinge of shame came into his heart when he thought that a

stranger from a far country was offering to do what his own countrymen and women were neglecting. Mrs. Cochrane now asked Margaret to sing, and she, delighted to please this great-hearted American woman, sat down at the piano and sang a southern lullaby.

"My dear," said Mrs. Cochrane, when Margaret had finished her song, "will you come out to America and visit me? You see I am pretty lonely now. Poor Sam's gone and I sure would like to have you for a daughter, for you are so loving and pretty."

Margaret laughingly replied that she would certainly like to come out to the wonderful country that gave birth to Mrs. Cochrane, and perhaps some day she would do so.

"Well, dear, I suppose I must be satisfied with your answer; but let me tell you right now, from now on I am your friend for life, and Mrs. Cochrane of Burley, Texas, is as good as a mother to you any day and don't you forget it. Come right here and kiss me," and Margaret did, not once; but several times.

The maid now entered bearing the card of Lord Bitterne. "Maggie," said Mrs. Cochrane turning to the maid, "you don't want to waste time bringing me bits of paper like this. If I am home, just show the folks right in."

"Out in my country," said Mrs. Cochrane, "we just naturally walk right in and if the folks are eating, we sit down and help them out."

Maggie departed and returning, showed Lord Bitterne into the room.

Lord Bitterne greeted Mrs. Cochrane with many apologies for not having called sooner, and then turned to greet Margaret, congratulating himself on his good fortune at finding her there, which was quite unexpected.

John Keen with some misgivings introduced Lord Bitterne to Margaret.

"I am awfully glad to meet you Miss Hinton," said his Lordship, "your singing the other evening really captivated me, I assure you."

Margaret murmured her thanks for his appreciation; but felt decidedly embarrassed at the look of admiration she saw in his eyes. Mary Richards was a friend of Margaret's and in confidence she had told Margaret to beware of Lord Bitterne, and this advice had not been given from any jealous motives; but Mary knew something of the weakness of the man she loved.

Lord Bitterne now monopolized Margaret, and although both Steven and John would have rather that she had never met him they felt that under the circumstances the only thing to do was to rescue Margaret from Lord Bitterne's infatuation.

To this end they made the conversation as general as possible. Mrs. Cochrane again asked Margaret to sing. When she had finished singing the maid brought in tea, and for the time being Lord Bitterne's "tete a tete" was ended. On Margaret's rising to take her departure his lordship hastily arose and begged permission to see her across the park and Margaret sorely against her will gave her consent.

Margaret was bitterly disappointed. In the first place, she did so want John to walk with her; and in the second place, she had no desire whatever for the company of Lord Bitterne or the class he represented.

"Well goodbye, dearie, come again," said Mrs. Cochrane, and Margaret bidding them all good afternoon, left the house in the company of his lordship.

"Mr. Keen," said Steven when Margaret had de-

parted, "I would like to speak to you in private. Could you spare me a few minutes?"

John readily consented and begging to be excused, Steven escorted John to his room.

"Sit down, Mr. Keen and light up, I want to tell you a story."

John sat down and Steven slowly pacing the floor commenced.

"Eight years ago I met a little girl. It did not take many days for us to realize that we loved each other. In a month we were married, and for seven long happy years we just lived for each other. We had two little children. The first was a boy and we called him David; for like the psalmist, our cup of joy ran over. The second was a little girl and we felt that Heaven had indeed come down on earth.

"We were bitterly poor; every dollar I could earn seemed to go like magic. How often have I sat and dreamed of the day when I could go home at night and take my little sweetheart in my arms and tell her that I was rich. Every morning when I left the little cottage to catch the car to town, she would watch me out of sight, and even now I can see her dear form as she stood waving her hand. In the evening when I returned home she would be watching for me and send my little boy to meet his daddy. She had always something new to tell me about the children. What David had said how Marjorie was trying to walk, and when the children were in bed she would just creep into my arms and we would speak of our great and wonderful love for each other.

"Then came a day when she fell sick. The doctor came and ordered an operation. The operation was not successful and a few days later she passed away. I thought that the sun had gone out. I cannot tell you

how much I loved and still love her; but Mr. Keen, my love for her was poor and insipid compared with her great pure love for me."

John Keen's eyes were wet and inwardly he wondered why God should have robbed Steven and his little ones of a wife and mother, and walking up to Steven he put his hands on his shoulders and said, "God knew best, Mr. Hargraves, and the sun will shine again."

"Thank you Mr. Keen, I understand your sympathy; but I want to tell you right now that I am wonderfully happy. I have spoken to my little girl and she bid me leave sorrow behind and be happy."

John for the moment could not quite understand what Steven meant when he said, "I have spoken to my little girl"; but Steven told John a marvelous story of how he had actually spoken to his little one through a medium.

"Of course, Mr. Keen, you do not believe in such things, do you?"

"No," said John, "I believe that Satan uses his knowledge of our past to impersonate our loved ones, and thereby lead us away from God."

"Well, Mr. Keen, listen. When my wife died I lost complete control of myself. Suicide or hopeless abandon were my thoughts then; but today I am trying to lead a Christian life; for when I asked my beloved if there was any mortal thing that I could do for her sake she answered, 'yes dear, serve God, look after my babies and keep yourself pure; for I am waiting for you.'

"Now Mr. Keen, don't you think that the devil is letting a wonderful opportunity go by in which to snatch souls from God? I know hundreds of men and women who today are leading a Christ-like life because

of the messages they have received from their dear ones who have gone before. What do you think, Mr. Keen?"

And for once in his life John could make no answer.

"I have told you my story, Mr. Keen, because I believe that just such another happy union as ours is going to be. I am not blind to the fact that Miss Hinton is more to you than anything in the world."

John bowed his head in acknowledgment.

"Then, for God's sake, Mr. Keen, watch over her; for I believe that George does not mean to do her any good."

"If any harm comes to my little girl through him, I shall kill him," said John in a whisper.

XI

The Duke of Renton had probably one of the most ancient castles to be found in England. It was situated in Sussex and centuries had passed over its greystone terraces and ivy-clad walls. Lying in the midst of a beautiful park with the wooded hills rising behind it made a charming view for the artist. To Mrs. Cochrane it seemed like a picture out of the history book that she studied when she went to school many years ago. To Steven, who had a wonderful imagination, he was living in the days of Chaucer when knights sallied forth in quest of adventure.

The Duke and Duchess welcomed their visitors with that courtly grace so characteristic of real gentlefolk, and Mrs. Cochrane realized during her short stay that she had met the real English aristocrat at last.

After dinner they sat and chatted very pleasantly and the Duchess told Mrs. Cochrane how her three sons had fallen in France, while the old Duke spoke with a father's pride of these boys who had died for their country.

The Duchess insisted that her guests retire early as no doubt they were tired after their journey down.

On being shown to her room the maid was told by Mrs. Cochrane that she could go.

“But Madame, I will undress you!”

“You bet your life you don’t undress me,” said Mrs. Cochrane. “I never knew of such a thing. Who ever heard of a strong healthy woman wanting to be undressed? If I can’t undress myself then you just send for the doctor. I sure will need him.”

The maid departed to her quarters, wondering.

After breakfast the next morning the Duke and Duchess escorted their guests over the estate. The Duke was very proud of his cattle, as indeed he had reason to be; for he owned some of the finest thoroughbreds in the world.

When Mrs. Cochrane had finished telling the Duke what she knew about cattle he marvelled at his ignorance. She told him how to tell the age of any steer or heifer at a glance, something the Duke had never known before; and her remarks on the raising of stock made the Duke envy Mrs. Cochrane's wonderful knowledge.

The Duchess also expressed her surprise.

"Duchess, did you ever have to get up at four o'clock every morning and milk twelve cows?"

The Duchess hastily disclaimed any such pleasure.

"Well, Duchess, let me tell you I did this for over twenty years. We had at one time over a thousand head of cattle and what my Sam didn't know about them ain't worth knowing."

After viewing the grounds they were shown over the picture gallery. This did not interest Mrs. Cochrane very much; but to Steven it was wonderful.

"This is the fifth Duke of Renton; he landed with Sir Walter Raleigh in Virginia," and Mrs. Cochrane, whose knowledge of history was rather vague asked how he liked America.

"I am sure I am sorry not to be able to tell you, Mrs. Cochrane."

"Oh well," replied Mrs. Cochrane, "perhaps he will come back some day and tell you all about it. And the Duke was too much of a gentleman even to smile.

The few days at Renton Park went all too quickly for both Mrs. Cochrane and Steven, and it was with

genuine regret that they bid farewell to their host and hostess.

They reached London early in the evening and Steven suggested that they take in a play. Mrs. Cochrane was nothing loth so after they had finished dinner, Mrs. Cochrane always said supper, they went to the Gaiety. Steven remembered his promise to Mary Richards that he would visit the Gaiety and see her act. Mary was certainly a splendid actress and round after round of applause greeted her appearance. Mrs. Cochrane thought it all very wonderful and tried to imagine the surprise and delight of her friends in Burley, Texas, if they had only come over with her.

Between the acts a note was brought to Steven and begging to be excused he opened it and read:

"I happened to notice you in the stalls this evening and wondered if you could find time to see me after the performance as I have something important which I should like to tell you."

*"Cordially yours,
"Mary Richards."*

At first Steven had a faint idea that Miss Richards was trying to vamp him; but remembering something of her gentle nature he banished such thoughts as unworthy and wondered what on earth Mary could possibly want to see him about.

He sent a verbal answer by the attendant, who brought the note and was waiting for an answer, that he would meet Miss Richards at the stage door after the performance; but asked her to allow him a half-hour's grace, as he first wished to escort Mrs. Cochrane home. A reply from Mary reached him just before the performance ended, to the effect that she

would not leave the theatre before twelve, so that Steven was able to take Mrs. Cochrane home and get back to the Gaiety in plenty of time.

Steven had not been waiting very long when Mary Richards appeared. She was a very pretty girl and had received more offers of marriage than the average star; but Mary was as wise as she was pretty and no amount of flattery could ever turn her head. She had loved one man, Lord Bitterne, and still loved him, and her smiling face hid a very sad and aching heart. Mary knew that Lord Bitterne would never make a fit husband for any girl. His mad infatuation for women would never allow him to keep true to one; for Mary had heard stories that had made her blush to think that she still loved him.

Steven greeted Mary in his usual gentle way and she thanked him for granting her request.

"Now, Mr. Hargraves," said Mary when her car drove up, "will you please escort me home; for I want to ask a favor of you?"

Steven expressed his delight at being able to render a service to such a talented artist. Miss Richards lived in the Maida Hill district with her mother, a gentle, white-haired old lady, who greeted Steven very kindly.

"Mother dear, will you entertain Mr. Hargraves for a few moments while I remove my hat and coat?" said Mary.

Steven was shown into a daintily furnished drawing-room and Mary soon reappeared.

"Now, Mother dear, you must be tired I am sure, so I will bid you goodnight," and fondly kissing her, Mrs. Richards retired after courteously extending an invitation to Steven to call again sometime.

"Mr. Hargraves," said Mary when they were alone, "I know that you are a friend of Lord Bitterne."

Steven bowed. "Did he ever tell you Mr. Hargraves, that we were once engaged to be married?"

"Yes," replied Steven, "and I understood from George that the engagement was not entirely broken off."

Poor Mary, she wished with all her heart that such was the case.

"No, no, Mr. Hargraves that is a thing of the past. I shall never marry any man, least of all Lord Bitterne; but I asked you to come here to tell you something far more serious than that. Do you know that Lord Bitterne is trying to make love to a very sweet girl?"

Steven expressed a hope that Lord Bitterne would be successful.

"Oh, I don't mean that he is making honest love," said Mary in a bitter voice, "would to God he were. He is simply trying to make a conquest of a girl of whom he is not worthy. Mr. Hargraves, it is embarrassing for me to have to tell you this; but I know that the lady in question is known to you. For God's sake warn her."

"Known to me," said Steven, "what is her name?" But before Mary could utter it Steven had guessed.

Margaret Hinton, that sweet woman whom John Keen loved. Steven rose to his feet and paced the room in an agitated manner.

"Miss Richards, thank you a thousand times for telling me this; but I know that Lord Bitterne will not be tolerated for one minute by Miss Hinton; for she already loves and is loved by one of the finest gentlemen I have ever met."

"I am glad, so very glad to think that dear Margaret is going to be happy; but oh God! why must I say it Mr. Hargraves! When Lord Bitterne desires a woman he will use any means under the sun, fair or foul, to

obtain her. I could tell you of one action of his that would horrify you; yes, I feel that I must tell you.

“Two years ago he made love to a little girl and she rejected his advances; shortly afterwards she left England and her baby, his baby, was born abroad. Mr. Hargraves, that poor little girl was drugged and ruined by Lord Bitterne, and I feel worried for Margaret.”

Steven’s face was as white as chalk. “Miss Richards, if this is true, why is it that Lord Bitterne is such a lovable man? I think quite a lot of George. True, I know that he is hopelessly infatuated when pretty women are about; but I give you my word of honor I never associated him with any action that could be termed unmanly.”

Mary came close to Steven and putting her hand on his shoulder she said, “Mr. Hargraves, at heart Lord Bitterne is one of the best men in the world; but his body has assumed control over his better self. It is a disease and only God knows how to cure it. There never yet was a more typical case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”

“Miss Richards, I will see George the first thing in the morning and warn him; and if I have the influence I used to have, I don’t think that you need worry any more about Miss Hinton.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hargraves, please do not let him know that I told you this; I hope that you may save Lord Bitterne from himself.”

How Steven reached home and at what time he never knew. His thoughts were first of the little girl sleeping so peacefully in that far-off country grave. Then of Margaret who reminded him so much of her; and his very soul felt sick at the possibility that little Margaret Hinton was in danger because of a moral degenerate.

XII

That night Steven's slumbers were disturbed by horrible dreams. He saw his little sweetheart struggling in the arms of another man and he would awake in a bath of perspiration. Again he would hear her dear, sweet voice calling for help and would try in vain to locate her.

As soon as the dawn was showing her faint light Steven arose and lighting a cigar spent the time in soliloquizing.

“What a beautiful world this would be,” thought Steven, “if only one could banish the evil things that contaminate. George, for instance, a fine, manly fellow and yet a slave to his passions, slowly but surely going down the steep path that ends in hell! No—something even worse than that. Foulness, disease, loathing, a thing that is to be shunned.”

Steven remembered a very dear friend of his whose life had been very much like that of Lord Bitterne's. He had started with splendid prospects; but his sensual desires had led him step by step to women of loose virtues. Then it was any girl, good or bad, married or single, that he had tried to corrupt. He did eventually marry a very charming girl who died giving birth to a child that was so horribly deformed that the nurse thanked God when the doctor told her it was impossible for the little one to live more than a few hours.

He could picture the last sad scene when he stood by the bedside of his friend and yet dared not clasp him by the hand; and the look of horror and remorse in the eyes of the dear boy who once put his little arms

around the neck of his mother and lisped her name in his baby way, haunted Steven for many years afterwards.

Steven had resolved to try and prevent any such fate happening to one that cared to call him friend. Deep in his heart he still had an idea that his friend was a man of honor. True he had let him run wild in New York; but he had done so with the intention of sickening the soul of this boy. Now he blamed himself for his folly.

"Well," said Steven to himself, "I will do my best to bring George to his senses."

As soon as breakfast was over Steven went to Park Lane. The butler, who knew Steven, informed him that his lordship was still in bed; but bade Steven wait until he had ascertained whether his lordship could see him.

Lord Bitterne had arrived home that morning at four-thirty after spending the night with a lady of more than doubtful character. When he was sufficiently awakened to recognize the name of his visitor he gave orders to have him shown up immediately. George gave Steven a hearty welcome and in his boyish way chided him for his apparent neglect.

He looked so innocent and fresh as he lay propped up by many pillows that for a minute Steven almost persuaded himself that this man was incapable of any action that was unclean or base.

Steven apologized for his absence by informing George, that in company with Mrs. Cochrane, he had spent a few days at Renton Park.

"Now, Steve, old man, I accept your apology and you must spend the remainder of the day with me. What is the time? Only ten o'clock; what little fairy hauled you out of bed so early, eh Steve? You have

been in England three weeks and I have only seen you four times. I'll tell you what, this afternoon we will run down to Maidenhead. I know some charming girls there—" And George would have gone on talking in his eager way had he not been brought to a sudden stop by:

"Have you found any trace of your mother?" Steven spoke in a soft voice and yet it seemed to fill the room. For a minute there was a silence and then:

"Dear God, I was forgetting about my mother." All the gaiety had gone out of Lord Bitterne's voice and he seemed a very sad and lonely boy.

"Thanks, Steven, for reminding me. I will get busy again this morning. I had almost forgotten the fact that possibly my dear mother is alive."

"George, I did not come here to ask you that; but something that to you and others is a million times more important."

Lord Bitterne looked at Steven with amazement.

"George, why are you annoying Miss Hinton with your attentions, and what is your object?"

"Why, Steve, I believe that you are jealous. My dear boy I like Miss Hinton very much and surely I am at liberty to pay her attention, and my object is just to make friends. As for annoying her, there will be time enough to answer that question when the lady we are discussing informs me that my attentions are unwelcome."

"I am glad to hear you talk like that, George. Please accept my apologies for speaking to you in the way I did; but I want you to know that Miss Hinton is practically engaged to a splendid man."

"I say, old chap," said Lord George in an anxious voice, "don't tell me that I am out of the running; for

believe me I think that Miss Hinton is the most charming girl that I ever met; and you know my dear Steven I never poach."

The sincere way in which he uttered these last words made Steven feel quite sure that Miss Richards had been mistaken in her estimate of his friend. "Well, George old boy, I have always held you to be a real gentleman and if my remarks have hurt you at all pray accept my sincere apologies."

"No apologies necessary, Steve, I know what a chivalrous knight you are; but candidly, old chap, don't you worry about me. I know that I have not always played the game; but honestly I am not so black as you imagine. Now spend the day with me and let us fancy that we are back in your good old New York."

Steven willingly promised to stay the day with his friend. George asked Steven to wait in the library and amuse himself with books while he performed the usual morning bath and breakfast.

To Steven, there were few places in the world where he would rather pass an hour and in a few minutes after being shown into the library he was deeply immersed in Carlyle's French Revolution.

It came as a surprise to him when Lord Bitterne appeared and informed Steven that it was nearly one o'clock. "So come, Steve, we will drop in at the club for lunch. I can introduce you to a lot of amusing fellows and some at least you will be glad to meet."

As the afternoon was so fine Lord George decided that they would walk and they made their way to Piccadilly. George constantly raised his hat en route to various ladies, some of whom gave him a knowing smile and again that little devil, doubt troubled Steven.

The club to which Lord Bitterne took Steven was one of the most cosmopolitan in London and needless

to say was always well patronized. Here one could meet a man from almost any quarter of the globe. Notwithstanding its heterogeneous membership it ranked as one of the best in London.

They went immediately to the dining-room and the steward placed them at a table where two other gentlemen had already started luncheon.

One of these gentlemen in question happened to be the Reverend Robert Stone while the other Lord Bitterne introduced to Steven as a Mr. Molstein. Steven immediately took an immense dislike to him.

He was one of those heavy, dark-featured gentlemen, whose eyes have a crafty, bestial look. The sort of a man that one would not care to introduce to his wife or sister.

He greeted Lord Bitterne in a friendly manner and it became apparent to Steven that Mr. Molstein was a most unsuitable companion for George. Steven got into conversation with Mr. Stone and watched with interest the brisk business-like way in which the Reverend Robert ate his lunch.

The Vicar had long since come to the conclusion that to eat and talk at the same time is a sin; therefore he made but little attempt to converse very briskly until his stomach told him that it was overloaded, when he breathed a sigh of regret and lighting a cigarette proceeded to become somewhat loquacious.

“By the way, Mr. Hargraves, have you attended our Church yet?”

Steven replying in the negative the Vicar made a lengthy speech on the beauty of holiness which made Steven feel as though he were a criminal just discovered in the act of breaking open the missionary box.

“Yes, yes, my dear sir,” said the Mr. Stone, “we must remember that the Church of Christ is the sal-

vation of our country; and we must always bear in mind this one fact, that the Church as it is today is our hope and our guide throughout the stormy path of life."

Steven wondered.

"By the way, Stone," said Lord George, breaking in, "I have far more wine in my place than I need, if you would care for any you know."

"No, no, my Lord, I thank you but when the war broke out and I by God's grace could see into the future, I realized that it would be well to stock up and I may say that my cellar is well filled. He who neglects to provide for his own house is worse than an infidel you know, Mr. Hargraves."

The only thing that Mr. Hargraves knew at that moment was, that the Vicar was the most selfish old humbug under the sun and wondered how it was possible for such men ever to be allowed to call themselves servants of God.

The Vicar became somewhat sleepy and conversation was carried on between Lord George and Mr. Molstein.

Steven asked permission to take a seat in the window where he could watch the steady stream of traffic as it bore past the club. He also was sleepy, and noting that the Vicar had already fallen asleep he let his head drop on his breast and dozed.

He awoke with a sudden start for he could swear that someone had uttered the name of Margaret Hinton. "Funny," thought Steven, "why there is no one here that could know her sufficiently well to speak of her in public," for with the exception of Steven, the Vicar and the two in conversation at the table, the room was empty. Steven was just nodding his head again when he heard quite plainly, "Tut, tut, my Lord,

every girl has her price and this Margaret Hinton will fall like the rest."

Steven only had one arm but in the twinkling of an eye he had Molstein by the collar and was shaking him as a terrier shakes a rat.

George, with difficulty, separated them and asked Steven what in the world he meant by assaulting his friend, while Molstein, his flabby face a dirty yellow, slowly wiped away the perspiration that oozed from his forehead.

"I have only one hand," said Steven, "but unless that miserable cad apologizes for his filthy talk regarding Miss Hinton I will beat him to a jelly."

Molstein with a sickly smile apologized and said, "I had no idea that she was a friend of yours, I was just discussing the lady with his Lordship."

"That's a damned lie, Molstein," said George, "I only asked you what you thought of her and your opinion is both degrading and insulting to a lovely woman."

As a matter of fact George was deeply interested in what Molstein had told him, but, as on several other occasions, his manhood had awakened in time.

George bade Molstein an abrupt farewell and taking Steven by the arm they left the club.

"Now, I wonder," thought Molstein, "how in the Dickens I am to make Lord Bitterne bite. I know that he is enamoured of the girl and I think that I could manage it for him. It will be worth a thousand pounds to me if it comes off; but who in the devil is this fiery American? Why don't they stay in their own country?" And with his feelings very much ruffled he took his departure.

Steven spent the remainder of the day with his

friend and they parted at midnight with a hearty hand-shake and protestations of friendship.

On parting from Steven, Lord Bitterne retired to his bedroom and proceeded to undress. He was in the act of removing his collar when his gaze wandered to a cheap print he had purchased in Paris. It was not a pretty picture by any means, just one of those common prints that appeal to the sensual appetite. The title was "*Honi soit qui mal-y pense.*" He wondered whether the artist had the failings of mankind in view when he drew that picture or, whether some evil spirit desiring to corrupt humanity by holding a flaming match to its magazine of impulse, had implanted this, and other pictures of like nature in the imagination of creative brains. A small still voice said, "be a man, banish such thoughts"; but his body answered, "I cannot; all my life I have so cultivated my lower nature that the seed of sensual desire immediately takes root."

A few minutes later he left the house and rapidly wended his way westward to the district of night clubs.

XIII

In England the month of September is one of the most charming months of the year. So thought John Keen as he wended his way over the park one fine morning. The Reverend Mr. Stone had asked him to call regarding an important matter and John was now walking in the direction of the vicarage. Previous experience had taught him that to visit his Vicar before eleven A. M. was simply wasting time; so therefore he took his leisure.

The Vicar was in his study when John arrived and as usual did not attempt to rise when John entered, but made the excuse of fatigue. As a matter of fact it would have really been painful for Robert Stone to rise to his feet. He had overloaded his stomach to such an alarming extent that his digestive organs would have seriously rebelled had he attempted to override their warnings, which of late had become many and frequent.

“My dear boy,” began the Vicar, “as you know I have not been feeling quite well lately and I am afraid that I must take a short vacation. As a general rule I do not take my holidays until October, but the doctors have ordered me a complete change; so I have decided to take a fortnight at my place in Hampshire. I am leaving tomorrow morning and I would like to give you a few instructions regarding your duties while I am away.”

John expressed his regret at the indisposition of his Vicar and willingly offered to perform any additional duties that he might see fit to bestow on him.

"Thank you, my dear boy; but I am glad to say I have no extra work for you. As you know my position in this diocese cannot be readily filled, unless of course it was by the bishop."

The Reverend Robert was right. It would take an extraordinary gluttonous, selfish, old hypocrite to fill his place. Indeed it was doubtful if such a person could be found.

"No, no, my boy," continued the old gormandizer, "I am conscious of my abilities and have no desire to thrust on anyone, least of all the nephew of my old friend, such arduous duties which I must in duty to my parishioners perform."

John bowed and marvelled.

"But I just asked you to call to tell you that it will be necessary for you to take the evening service this Sunday, and I thought that a little fatherly advice would not come amiss. For instance, my dear boy, in preaching to such a congregation as assembles at St. Martha's, you must always remember that you have the elite; and it is never necessary to profane their ears with the same sort of story that you would naturally preach to the lower classes."

"Do you mean to say, sir," said John, "that the congregation of St. Martha's are all earnest Christian men and women?"

"Precisely," replied the Vicar.

"Then," said John, "let me tell you sir, that some of the vilest sinners that this world ever produced are members of your church. I did not join the Church of Christ to serve fashion or society, but to speak the gospel of my Master."

"Of course, of course," said the Vicar, hastily betraying a most uncomfortable demeanor, "but my dear boy, the gospel is pleasant, never unkind."

"Quite true sir. Then why ask me to differentiate between two classes of people? My knowledge of the gospel is that Christ came to condemn evil not to make friends with it."

The Vicar was still more uncomfortable.

"Yes, yes, my boy, I know, but what I mean is, do not tell your congregation to do this and that; because I can assure you it would create a very bad feeling and I should not like to think that such a promising young man as John Keen would spoil his career by an act of indiscretion. So there, my boy, I am sure that I can rely on you to be discreet."

John felt the utter futility of replying to such blasphemy, so he held his peace.

"I will probably be back before the following Sunday; but I know that I can rely on your good work in the meantime."

John took his departure and could have wept with shame when he thought of the hideous mockery lurking beneath the cloak of so-called Christianity.

On leaving the vicarage, John decided that he would pay a visit to Cross Keys.

He had been very successful in his work there and had made a score of friends. But oh! the bitterness of poverty. John had seen hunger in its ghastly work, disease unchecked and had listened to the cry of starving babies. All John had in the world was his miserable stipend and that was spent almost before he received it. He never desired wealth for himself; "but," thought John, "if only I were rich enough to buy Cross Keys Passages, tear them down, and send its residents away into some place in the country. How my heart yearns to be able to feed these little children, yes," thought John in great bitterness, "even these things would be simple if only one-twelfth of the con-

gregation of St. Martha's were Christians." John had never forgotten the death of Lizzie Smith and the wretched story which Margaret had told him.

As the thought of Margaret came to John he felt wonderfully happy. That very morning he had received a letter from Frank Greymarsh. Frank wrote a most optimistic letter. He was located in Pennsylvania, where his father held the principal interest in the iron industry of his district.

After telling John about the splendid outdoor life, and the glorious freedom, he concluded by saying, "if at any time you want to live, come out here to this wonderful country, John, you need never starve. There is always plenty of work and I can give you a good start, so don't worry over your future." And John saw in these last lines visions of Margaret as his wife; for he knew that before long the so-called Church and he would part company." And yet, he thought, "I would have died in defense of Her purity not two months ago."

On reaching Cross Keys he was greeted by his faithful William. Money was scarce for William and he was just setting forth on a pilgrimage in the hope of meeting some benevolent disperser of free pints when he saw John.

"Good morning, Captain, I was expecting yer this morning, so I just 'ung around in 'opes you'd be comin'."

"I thank you, William. That is very kind of you I am sure. Now tell me, how is Mrs. Lashword?"

"W'y, to tell yer the truf, I don't think that she will 'ang on much longer."

"Dear me," said John, "I am sorry to hear that. I was rather hoping that she would be improved."

"Well, Captain, 'tain't any use 'anging on when you

ain't wanted. She'll be better off anyway. W'y, there's a lidy there nah 'elping 'er a bit."

"A lady," said John anxiously, "not—"

"No Cap, not 'er. This is some old bird; but she's a goer."

John took his way to the filthy pen where a poor woman was dying of a wasting disease brought on by poverty and neglect. To his amazement when he entered he was greeted by no other person than Mrs. Cochrane.

"Sure, come in Parson, but it would be nicer to say keep out."

Mrs. Cochrane had her skirts pinned up and was busy wielding a mop.

"I ain't trying to raise the dirt any," said Mrs. Cochrane, "that's beyond me, but I am just trying to lay the dust."

The poor little woman huddled up on some old rags in the corner was watching Mrs. Cochrane with something like devotion. Mrs. Cochrane did not tell John that a quarter of an hour before she had taken the woman in her arms in spite of the filthy rags and cried over her. As for Mrs. Lashwood it was years ago since she had received a kind word or look; and to her, Mrs. Cochrane was nothing less than an angel.

"Now, Parson," said Mrs. Cochrane, "you go out and get me a doctor and get him right quick."

John departed on his errand, adding to his memory one other act of this lovable American woman.

During his absence, and while Mrs. Cochrane was trying to perform the impossible feat of opening the window so that a little air, which even Mrs. Cochrane would not call fresh, could get into the room, someone came up the stairs and into the room. Such a man—dirty, unkempt, and well under the influence of liquor.

"God blimey, what the 'ell is this 'ere world a-comin' to? 'Ere's my old woman wif company. Good afternoon, ma'm, and what can I do fer yer lidyship?"

"Are you the guy that leaves this poor little girl here to starve while you fill your belly with filthy beer, you—"

"Nah, nah, come off it, I tell yer come off it. Me and my Sal understand each other, don't we mate?"

Old man Lashwood did not know what he was up against. He was speedily to find out, for Mrs. Cochrane let her indignation get the upper hand. She made one dive at this wretch with the mop; it caught old man Lashwood fairly in the face and a stream of water almost as thick as soup ran down his neck.

That settled him. If the mop had been dry he would perhaps have faced the music. But water, ugh! why it was many months since his flesh had felt its wetness; so old man Lashwood choking with profanity made his way into the passages and contented himself with the knowledge that after this mad woman had left he would be able to go back and take revenge on his dying wife.

John soon returned with a doctor and it did not take him five seconds to sum up—"perhaps a week, no more, last stages of consumption."

"Sure, ain't there anything that can be done to make her more comfortable?" said Mrs. Cochrane.

"Hardly necessary, is it?" said the doctor, for this was no uncommon case to him.

"I asked you a question," said Mrs. Cochrane, "and I am just waiting for an answer."

"Well, in that case," said the doctor, "you might possibly prolong life some three or four weeks if you could get her away to the seaside."

"Parson," said Mrs. Cochrane, "I don't know much about this country, but tell me which is the nearest seaside that this man is speaking about."

"Southend," replied John, "is the nearest."

"I might tell you, my dear lady," said the doctor, "that it will cost you in the neighborhood of fifty pounds to get this woman down to Southend. In the first place you would have to take her all the way by private ambulance; and even when you reach there you would have to pay a good price for her care, because if you are going through with this thing you must have a trained nurse night and day."

"Money?" said Mrs. Cochrane bitterly, "why, I would give all my money right now if I could save this poor girl," and going over to the bed she again lifted the wasted form of Mrs. Lashwood and kissed her.

John smiled, but the doctor marvelled.

"Tell me, Mr. Keen, who owns these wretched pig pens?" asked Mrs. Cochrane

"I don't know," said John sadly.

"I wish I knew," she replied, "because if I did know I would just go straight to them and say something that they had never heard before."

William Smith, loafing around outside was summoned by John Keen and asked if he knew whether the husband of Mrs. Lashwood was about.

"'E is, sir, but 'e ain't exactly sober; anyways 'e wouldn't come in 'ere. That lidy tried to blind 'im just now."

"Blind him," said Mrs. Cochrane indignantly, "pity he didn't go blind before he ever cast his eyes on this poor, dear girl. Say, friend, who owns these cow-sheds?"

"W'y, as a matter of fac', Mr. Molstein owns 'em,

all except the two pubs, and they is owned by Mrs. Stone."

"Do you mean the wife of the Reverend Mr. Stone, William?" said John Keen.

"Yes, that's 'er."

"My God," said John, "my God."

"Don't you worry God just yet, Parson, and leave that boss of yours to me; but when can I reach this Molstein guy?"

"Well," said William, "'e is out of town just nah, but I think 'e will be back next Wednesday."

"Then," said Mrs. Cochrane, "I shan't be here next Wednesday, so don't you interfere till I come back. I am just going to stay with this dear girl."

Ten days afterwards Sally Lashwood died at South-end with the salt breeze fanning her wasted cheeks, and her husband, brought down by Steven Hargraves, held her hand and called her Sal. And Sally passed away into the glory of God happy; yes happier than she had ever been in her life before.

XIV

John Keen was a bitter disappointment to the congregation of St. Martha's. The church had been particularly well filled, anticipating something really good from this splendid looking young man, and behold he had preached, not to them but at them.

John had taken for his text, "As much as ye do this unto the least of my brethren," and in an earnest voice had pleaded with those present to come to the help of the suffering people who like derelicts were aimlessly drifting. He spoke of the cry of little children, the hunger of women, and the dire need existing right in the parish of St. Martha's.

But John was preaching to a class of people who had long since come to the conclusion that the poor were a necessary evil. Indeed, there were a few who actually expressed the view that to help the poor was entirely contrary to the teachings of Christ, while others blamed trade-unions and strikes and said, "serves them jolly well right, the Bolshevik Blighters."

So John was placed on the black book of practically every saint who had heard him preach. But there was one who loved him for his manly courage. Margaret, who had noticed the apathy and indifference with which his sermon had been received, wept silently as she knelt for the closing benediction.

She waited for John, for it was a regular custom now to meet him every Sunday evening, and they would take a bus ride to the outskirts of the city and back again.

John knew that soon he would have to leave the Church, and he saw no prospect of calling Margaret his wife. His consolation of late, however, was that the offer of Frank Greymarsh was always open; so perhaps after all things were not so black as they might be. And Margaret's heart was full of longing, knowing that until he was absolutely in a good position John would never marry her; and yet all these things were forgotten during these Sunday evening rides.

"John, dear," said Margaret, "I think that your sermon was wonderful, and I am sure that God will help these poor people."

John turned his face towards Margaret and smiled.

"Thank you, dear, I am glad that you liked it; but dear, the congregation took it very ill. I could see the looks of disdain as I pleaded for help. Surely there must be a little love left in the heart of society."

"I am afraid, John, that there is very little left. Self first, second and third seems to be their password. You have not made any friends tonight, dear, but you must always speak the truth, and God will help you to succeed," and with a little sob Margaret clung to his hand.

"Don't worry, little girl, the future is before us and I know that some day I shall succeed in life; but I am afraid, dear, that it is only a question of weeks now when I shall leave the Church forever."

The remainder of the ride was passed in silence, each thinking of the other. On alighting at Hyde Park, they were delighted to meet Steven Hargraves. Steven was particularly happy at that moment, for he had received news from New York that an influential publishing house would be pleased to accept his services in the editorial department, and as the salary was quite generous, Steven felt very happy.

Steven knowing something of John's finances had been wondering what he could do to help him. He knew how much these two loved each other and nothing would have given him more pleasure than to see John in a position to marry.

The first thought that came to Steven as he saw them was, "Why doesn't this man throw up his Church and come out to America with me, where he will get a chance?" For he had long since found out that to succeed in the Church depended on one's social relations; in other words, the Church and society were very closely related.

Steven told them about his offer and acceptance. "I do wish, Miss Hinton," he said, "that you could persuade Mr. Keen to come out to America. I know scores of openings where a man like Mr. Keen would succeed."

Margaret turned a flushed and happy face to John and waited for his answer.

"Thank you, Mr. Hargraves, I may accept your kind offer of assistance sooner than you expect," said John.

"I guess you would be doing the right thing, Mr. Keen, so don't worry about your work now. I can see how things are. I am feeling lonely just now; Mrs. Cochrane is down at Southend. Could you two people come and have some supper with me?" The pressure of Margaret's hand decided John, so they accepted Steven's invitation.

There is a very select little cafe on Pall Mall that is patronized chiefly by the gentlefolk who cannot afford to keep a good cook. Steven had found the place by chance and regularly took his meals there during the absence of Mrs. Cochrane. As the evening was well advanced it was easy to get a table to themselves and Margaret at her host's invitation ordered the supper.

They were very happy, these three, chatting away as though they had not a care in the world. They were just thinking of rising to go when a disturbance took place at the other end of the room. A girl had screamed and a man's voice was heard trying to pacify her. All his entreaties, however, seemed to be fruitless; for the girl, suddenly springing from the table at which she was seated ran towards the door. On catching sight of John Keen, however, she came up to him and in a frightened sobbing voice asked him to protect her.

Margaret arose and taking the girl by the hand bade her sit down. John looked in the direction from whence the girl had come and was surprised to see Lord Bitterne coming towards them.

"Oh, I say, you know, awful nuisance and all that but I can assure you that there is a mistake."

A chilly silence greeted Lord Bitterne's remarks.

"George, how can you explain the distress of this young lady?" inquired Steven.

"Why," said George with an embarrassed look, "this young lady consented to come to supper and I was just a little bit foolish and wanted to kiss her. You know how silly I am, Steven."

"My Lord," said John, "we shall have much pleasure in seeing this young lady to her home."

Lord Bitterne bowed and calling the waiter paid his bill and departed.

"Now who ever would have thought," said Lord Bitterne to himself as he departed on his way, "that this little chit of a girl would object to being kissed? I wish to goodness that I had never seen her silly face. Damn it! that Hinton girl was there too; after this I shall be completely ignored and I would do anything rather than let her think ill of me."

Had Lord Bitterne known it, he was already distrusted by Margaret; indeed she thought him the personification of all that was weak in man. She knew the story of the little girl that he had ruined.

After Lord Bitterne left the cafe the girl became more calm and told them how she had met him at a dance and had promised to take supper with him that evening and then in a voice of shame she tried to tell them of his Lordship's endeavors to kiss her.

They all left the cafe together and Steven called a taxi and gave the chauffeur orders to take the girl to her home. She was nervous and hysterical, but she had, at any rate, received a lesson that would not be forgotten.

Steven parted from John and Margaret at Park Corner, for much as he would have liked to remain in their society, he could anticipate their desire to be together.

John and Margaret walked slowly through the Park both thinking of the scene they had witnessed that evening.

“By the way, Margaret, I have often thought of that poor girl who died in Cross Keys.”

“Do you mean Lizzie Smith?” said Margaret.

“Yes,” replied John, “and I want you to give me the name of the miserable wretch who was responsible for her death.”

“John, dear, nothing matters now. She has gone to heaven. Let matters rest, God will punish him.”

“You are right, dear, I should have forgotten it, but I was thinking of Lord Bitterne. I knew him so well at college and he was such a lovable chap. I would do anything to save him from the hell which he is creating for himself.”

Margaret kept silent. She dared not tell John that

Lord Bitterne had tried to force his attentions on her; of the many flowers and scores of invitations she had received from him, all of which she had thrown in the wastepaper basket.

"Good night, dear Margaret," said John, as they reached her apartment house, "rest well."

"Thank you, John dear. Good night."

After a last kiss, they parted.

But John did not sleep until the sun had risen many hours. After parting from Margaret he had sought out Lord Bitterne. He found George at home, and he had listened to one of the most powerful sermons John had ever preached.

"You are right, John old chap, and God help me. I try to run straight, but my passion for women has me, and I am afraid that only death will end it."

"Perhaps, Bitterne, it may be something worse than death. Pull yourself together and be a man."

Lord Bitterne promised that he would try to play the game, and John, not knowing the state of degeneracy into which Lord Bitterne had fallen, believed him.

Lord Bitterne then told John of his fruitless efforts to find any trace of his mother.

"There is no doubt that she is dead, but I did so hope that I could have found her," he said.

"It seems so strange," said John, "because all accounts of her Ladyship were too sweet to have—" and John stopped for he could not say the word.

"Don't mind me, John. I know what you were going to say; but after all it seems to be the only solution. My mother must have thought the Thames far more merciful than my father," said Lord Bitterne.

John expressed a wish that all yet would come right.

He left as the clock was striking six in the morning and returning to his rooms was soon soundly sleeping.

XV

Mrs. Cochrane stayed on a few days after Mrs. Lashwood had passed away. The unfortunate man who claimed Mrs. Lashwood for his wife was sent back to London where he speedily sought out his old haunts and forgot that such a thing as marriage existed. Mrs. Cochrane had asked him to let her help him on his way to America where work could be obtained, but the word "work" made him hastily refuse.

Steven went down to Southend and spent the last few days with Mrs. Cochrane.

"There's going to be something doing when I meet Mrs. Stone. I can't sleep at night for thinking of all this misery in a country which calls itself the most powerful in the world; they sure have got the most powerful poverty I ever saw. And this Mrs. Stone, Steve, owns those two filthy saloons in the alleys. You just wait, Steve, till I meet her."

Steven held his peace for he had known Mrs. Cochrane too long to attempt to stop her when once her mind was made up.

On arriving in London, the first thing Mrs. Cochrane did was to ascertain whether Mrs. Stone was in town.

"It appeared," so said the butler who answered the 'phone, "that both Mr. and Mrs. Stone were dining out that evening at a Mrs. MacDougall's," and gave Mrs. Cochrane the address.

"Here's where I get busy, Steve; see that a

taxi is here for me in half an hour. I'll just change my dress, and say, Steve, you'd better come along."

It was in vain that Steven pointed out that it would be a distinct breach of etiquette to call on people at that time of night.

"Oh, shucks! Steve, we ain't here to study etiquette. Let's go."

As before stated Steve had no option but to obey.

Mrs. MacDougall prided herself on only receiving the best people; that is, they who could boast of an income of not less than twenty-five thousand pounds a year. She was giving a little dinner this evening in honor of a certain author who had suddenly leaped into fame. The dinner had gone off smoothly and the company were seated in the drawing-room listening to some music when the butler announced, "Mrs. Cochrane and Mr. Steven Hargraves." Mrs. Stone audibly sniffed as they entered the room; poor woman, she would have sniffed herself out of London if she could only have known.

Mrs. MacDougall received them graciously and expressed herself pleasantly surprised at their visit.

"I am sure much obliged, ma'am, but I ain't come here to see you, I want to talk to that ginger-headed woman over there," indicating with her thumb Mrs. Robert Stone. Mrs. Stone gasped with anger and mortification. To be called "a ginger-headed woman" in public!

Mrs. Stone rose to her feet, "do you mean to insinuate—" she began.

"Yes, ma'am, I do. I don't know what you are

trying to say, but if you mean telling the truth, without any trimming, I sure am that party. Now, ma'm, what do you mean by letting the poor people starve to death at the very door of your house?"

Mrs. Stone replied that the poor were nothing to her.

"Nothing to you, ma'am! Why every penny they earn they put into your pocket by buying that filthy poison from your saloons. These dope houses of yours should be pulled down; and believe me, ma'am, if I had my way I would make you pull them down yourself. What do you mean by it," said Mrs. Cochrane fiercely, "answer me that."

But Mrs. Stone had fainted. She was bowled completely out.

"Well, if you can't answer me now I suppose that I must call on you some other time. Come on, Steve, let's be going. Goodbye, ma'am," said Mrs. Cochrane, bowing to Mrs. MacDougall and the company present, "and next time I call on you don't let that debased robber be anywhere handy, because her and me don't hit it," and Mrs. Cochrane sailed majestically from the room, leaving a silence that was worse than painful. It was broken at last by the hysterical voice of Mrs. Stone who had come to and inquired why Mrs. MacDougall had invited such a woman.

"Invite her! Good heavens, I did not invite her; she just came." And a Mrs. LeFay, a lady present, could heartily endorse this statement, for she had received a visit from Mrs. Cochrane only a few weeks ago when she wasn't expecting the honor.

Mrs. LeFay had just finished drinking her morning cup of tea when the maid informed her that a Mrs. Cochrane had called.

"Why in the world did you not say I was out? Tell her I am indisposed."

The maid gave Mrs. Cochrane the message, but Mrs. Cochrane had come there to see Mrs. LeFay and the word indisposed struck Mrs. Cochrane as being ridiculous.

"I guess I'll just walk up to her room. She will be tickled to death to see me, I know."

In passing by a door leading into the breakfast room, Mrs. Cochrane heard someone sobbing and immediately tried to divine the cause. On entering the room she found a poor white-faced housemaid who was sitting on the floor sobbing as though her heart would break. Mrs. Cochrane just did what she always did, took the poor little girl in her arms and tried to comfort her. In a few minutes the maid had told Mrs. Cochrane quite sufficient. It was to the effect that she had been up until four that morning and then had to rise again at six; that she was weak and ill, and that Mrs. LeFay had threatened to discharge her without a character if she did not work harder, and—

"Stop, child! Don't tell me any more. Say, you do what I tell you now. Do you understand?"

"Yes," the poor girl sobbed.

"Well, just you go and pack up your things and be ready to come away with me in a quarter of an hour."

The girl hesitated. "Go on, now, and get your things packed. You've got another job, my dear." And the maid departed to fulfill her order, won-

dering if the end of the world had come, while Mrs. Cochrane marched into the bed chamber of Mrs. LeFay.

Mrs. LeFay languidly extended her hand as she lay on her couch. Mrs. Cochrane did not take it, but instead gave her an epitome on her character that almost paralyzed her. The word lazy being repeated at several intervals and finally Mrs. Cochrane left the room, and the last thing Mrs. LeFay heard sounded like "You no-account heifer."

Mrs. Cochrane descended to the hall and waited for her protégé to come down. The little girl came down at last and on Mrs. Cochrane's inquiring as to the whereabouts of her belongings, the maid said that her box was too heavy to carry down herself.

"Don't you worry about that, my dear. Now, then, you poor boob," said Mrs. Cochrane, addressing the portly butler, "hop upstairs and bring this girl's box down." The amazed butler did her bidding and actually carried the box out to the taxi. Mrs. Cochrane took a final shot at the butler before they drove away, "Say, how would you like to try working for a living? Ain't you ashamed of yourself, walking about all dolled up like a Dutch hash slinger?" And as the taxi took its departure the horrified butler slowly sank to the pavement.

Mrs. Cochrane took the poor little maid in her arms and kissed her saying, "You just stay right on with me, my dear; I am going home very shortly and you come too. We know how to treat our hired girls out there."

Mrs. Stone left as soon as she thought it safe,

and on arriving home took to her bed, while poor Robert received enough abuse from his faithful spouse to last him for the remainder of his life, for Mrs. Stone blamed her husband for not forcibly removing Mrs. Cochrane from her presence.

Poor Steven, he felt very much embarrassed during the lecture administered to Mrs. Stone by Mrs. Cochrane, but at the same time he loved Mrs. Cochrane all the more for her wonderful, generous nature.

"I don't know, Steve, what to make of this country. I never saw so many poor people in my life. Some of these rich guys here seems as proud as a prize bull, all dolled up ready for the fair; and Steve, God knows what they have to be proud of. I feel homesick, Steve, let's go home."

Steven had been lonely himself and agreed that there was no place like home after all. It was the middle of September so they made up their minds to return to America as soon as the month was out.

"What do you intend doing with the little girl you brought here?" said Steven.

"I'll take her across with me, Steve. She seems very fond of me. My land sakes, that woman would have killed her if I hadn't taken her away. She sure has filled out some since she's been living here. Have you noticed it, Steve?"

"She is certainly improved in looks: but hasn't she any friends or relatives in this country who should be consulted as to her future?"

"Nary a one, Steve. This little girl is what they call a love child: you know Steve, I can't explain."

"I know, Mrs. Cochrane," said Steve, "and I am glad that she is now a ward of the dearest woman in the world."

"Cut it out, Steve," said Mrs. Cochrane smiling. "Why, boy, there are heaps of little girlies who would be tickled to death to hear you peddle the blarney stuff like that. I suppose, Steve, you'll marry again some day."

"I suppose so," said Steven listlessly; but nevertheless he knew that some day a little girl having his dear wife's pretty ways and unselfish, loving nature would creep into his heart and that he must sooner or later provide a mother for his little children.

XVI

There were only a few people left in the club card-room; for the early hours of morning find many empty pockets and dissatisfied minds, and generally after midnight the exodus is noticeable.

At one table sat, Lord Bitterne, his shirt front stained with wine, and his appearance in general speaking very strongly of his having spent a giddy evening. His face was flushed and he appeared excited. Opposite him sat Mr. Molstein. Lord Bitterne had reached that stage when he was heartily sick of the life he was leading, and Molstein divining this smiled as he thought of how soon this man would be seeking a fresh face.

"Well, well, my Lord, I am sorry that you are bored with this existence of ours. What your Lordship needs is a little excitement."

"Excitement be damned," replied Lord George, "what I need is a good pure woman to share my life. I tell you candidly, Molstein, I feel just now like taking a dose of poison or putting a bullet through my brain. I would give my soul to meet some woman who could fill that lonely void."

"But, my Lord," said Molstein in his soft, oily voice, "you surely should have no difficulty in finding a wife. Why, there are hundreds who would be only too glad to accept your Lordship for a husband."

"Rot, Molstein, talk sense. I am not in the humor for rot. When I said a woman, I meant

some decent girl. Damn you, Molstein, you know very well that the class of women that you are referring to are past mistresses in the art of sensuality."

"No, no, my Lord, you wrong me. I was thinking of women such as that charming singer, Miss Hinton."

"That's all very well, Molstein, but you know I am too rotten for a girl like Miss Hinton to give a second thought to; although I have tried hard enough to get on a friendly footing with her, and after all what right have I to dare associate my thoughts with Miss Hinton, miserable soul-stained wretch that I am."

"Now, my Lord, you must not condemn yourself in that way, but I am glad to know that you still have hopes of handing your name down to posterity."

"What the devil do you mean, Molstein? Here, shut up! Let's go on with the game. Order something to drink, I am parched."

Molstein inwardly chuckled, for his fish had already nibbled and he hoped before dawn to land him. They played steadily for nearly two hours without either winning or losing anything to speak of, but during these two hours Molstein had seen to it that his Lordship drank deep and plentifully. The wine was now beginning to tell, for Lord Bitterne's laugh rang out very often as he lost or won.

Molstein did not care a hang about the game they were playing. What he needed was something more substantial than a few paltry pounds. He had waited for the opportunity to be alone with Lord Bitterne. He had picked him up in

the evening at a cafe in Leicester Square. Lord Bitterne had just been played by two charming damsels who, after relieving him of sufficient cash to keep them both in comfort for the remainder of the week, had quietly slipped away without fulfilling their promises, and his Lordship was peeved at such conduct. Molstein had found him in this particular mood, and knowing Lord Bitterne, opportunity did not look better; so he had persuaded Lord George to come around to Sherman's Night Club and play a hand of picquet.

Lord Bitterne leaned back in his chair and declined to play any more. "I am sick of cards and women."

"But not all women," insinuated Molstein.

"No, not all women, Molstein. Now, for instance, if I thought that there was any possible chance to get friendly with Margaret Hinton—"

Molstein smiled.

"Yes," went on Lord Bitterne, "I would give anything to have that little darling in my arms and kiss those red lips. Anything, do you hear me, Molstein, anything."

Lord Bitterne had lost his spirit of remorse. His brain was aflame with wine and passion.

"Well, my Lord, why don't you take her in your arms and kiss her if you want to? These women pretend to be prudes so as to make themselves more desirable."

"I believe you are right, Molstein. What right has this girl, a public singer, to slight me? Peer of the realm, mind you."

"Well, well, my Lord, I imagine she will come your way some day."

"That is all very well, you telling me some

day, but I can't wait; I want her now, and I want her badly," said George.

"I dare say I could arrange that you meet her—shortly," said Molstein slowly.

"Give me your hand, Molstein, I can see hope in your words. Now tell me. Meet her when, and where?"

"In answer to that, my Lord, I would leave the time to you, except that I would suggest at night, and the place—well, suppose we say her bedroom."

Lord Bitterne rose unsteadily to his feet. "My God! Molstein, if you could manage that I would give you anything that you asked."

"Well, you know it would not be easy, but I dare say that I could arrange for a meeting such as I have suggested for—shall we say five thousand pounds?"

"Molstein, I never desired a girl so much in my life as I desire this Margaret Hinton. If you can pull this thing off, I will give you a check for that amount with pleasure."

"Then shake hands, my Lord, for I am going to relieve you of that particular sum at a very early date. Let me see, today is Wednesday; I think that next Sunday night will find Margaret Hinton in your arms."

Lord Bitterne walked to the window and opening the curtains looked out over the river. The dawn had already cast her pale light over the city and the rumble of a few early carts was heard as they made for the markets. His soul was aflame with desire. There was a singing in his brain. It was, "She's yours, at last."

Molstein, devil, fiend incarnate, watched him

with a smile on his face. How easy it had been. Why, after that outburst when the fiery American had been present he had wondered if it would ever be possible.

Money came first to Molstein, then women. He had ruined more women than he could remember. It gave him perfect satisfaction to seduce a young girl and then cast her aside; yet Molstein himself was a married man with growing daughters.

Lord George staggered home mad with lust and passion. He tossed feverishly on his bed until sleep overcame him. Molstein took his departure from the club in a jocular frame of mind. And why shouldn't he? He had just made five thousand pounds. True it was to encompass the ruin of a young innocent girl, but what was that to him? He had some business to attend to before he could go home and greet his loving wife. He had to walk a short distance in the direction of Charing Cross. He soon reached his destination, which was a house that once might have been the residence of some prosperous tradesman. Times had changed, however, and it was now a third rate apartment dwelling. It was kept by a lady named Schmidt, and Molstein after ringing the bell contentedly waited for her appearance. A few minutes passed and he was admitted.

"My gracious, Mr. Molstein, what brings you here at this early hour of the morning?" said the mistress of the house, a fat woman almost as evil as Molstein himself.

"Business, my dear lady, business. I have a little job I want done—"

"Not so loud, young Carstains is here."

"He is, eh," said Molstein, "who's the lady?"

"The usual thing," replied Mrs. Schmidt, "there was a pretty little woman who got into debt and was afraid to tell her husband. I found out through Lily Mears, so I set Lily at work and she soon showed her how to clear herself of debt without anybody being the wiser. Although it was very difficult I can assure you, for the lady backed out at the last minute and we had to use—"

"Just so," said Molstein, "a little chloroform, eh? Very useful thing, Mrs. Schmidt; but that was sometime ago. What did the lady say when she came round?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Schmidt smiling, "the deed was done then, you know, so I suppose she is now asleep in the arms of young Carstains."

"Very interesting story, Mrs. Schmidt. But now to business. This Lily Mears you speak of, is she to be trusted?"

"Absolutely," replied Mrs. Schmidt.

"Well then just pay attention. If you can do what I am going to ask you it will mean fifty pounds for you. Now listen, there is a certain girl living here in London whom a young friend of mine has taken a fancy to, and for some outlandish reason she refuses to have anything to do with him. She lives in a suite of apartments with an elderly lady, no servants kept. Next Sunday evening I shall arrange that the elderly person is called away by telegram. Lily Mears must call on the girl and tell her some story of poverty, for this particular girl I am speaking

of is very soft hearted, and Lily must use either a little laudanum, which would be best, or failing that, repeat your practice of tonight. When the fair lady is asleep Lily must pull up the blind in the front room for a moment and then wait for my friend. She can then return to her home."

"But, Mr. Molstein, it is a very risky thing. I don't like it a bit."

"Then let me tell you, Mrs. Schmidt, you have got to like it," said Molstein.

"Well, I will manage it somehow. I suppose that you will see me again before Sunday and give me the address."

"Certainly, Mrs. Schmidt, expect me Saturday evening about nine," and bidding Mrs. Schmidt a cordial good morning, Mr. Molstein went home to sleep the sleep of the just.

When Mr. Molstein had left the house, Mrs. Schmidt fell to musing. "The greedy old beast, I wonder how much he is getting out of this. I never saw such a man as him in all my life. He always manages to get the cream of the trade," which remark seemed to savor of a certain profession, little known to the great mass of humanity who day after day pride themselves on living in a country where decency is the rule.

Mrs. Schmidt was disturbed in her musings by a step on the stair and throwing open the door, she espied a girl slowly creeping towards the front door and she smiled as she recognized the victim of the previous evening. The poor unfortunate looked piteously towards Mrs. Schmidt, but seeing no pity in her face she turned away and opening the front door went out into the street.

She walked towards the embankment and stood for a moment watching the swift running water. God knows what she thought. A few minutes afterwards there was a splash, a few struggles, and the poor little girl that a few weeks ago had been a happy and contented wife, had found peace.

XVII

The third Monday in September was generally selected by the Reverend Mr. Stone for a garden party. That is to say, on this particular date the Christian people who regularly attended St. Martha's would meet and drink tea, talk the usual scandal and thank God for the Church. Not that they cared whether the Church was good or bad, but this garden party had of recent years come into being and so they were bound by social laws as immutable as those of the Medes of Persians to obey that Autocrat, Dame Fashion. This year the gathering was held at the residence of a Mr. and Mrs. Markham, who although not exactly rich, at least managed to go along very nicely on the reputation of Mr. Markham who was an artist of some repute.

The Vicar, of course, was bound to be present, and indeed he took good care that on all or any occasion where good food was plentiful to go early and leave late. Mrs. Stone was not going as she had an unpleasant thought in her mind that in all probability Mrs. Cochrane would be present.

Mrs. Cochrane was going for exactly the opposite reason for she had not yet finished her interrupted conversation with Mrs. Stone. So with Steven as escort she set out for the house of Mrs. Markham.

"I do hope, Steve, that we shall see that ginger-headed woman again. I sure shall say a mouthful if we do meet her. I wonder why Congress don't order those saloons pulled down."

Mrs. Cochrane had not yet adapted herself to the

way of London. She could not understand why such dire necessity existed, for she had been born and raised on a ranch where everybody worked, ate, slept, and arose at cockcrow; where everybody was happy and contented; and where sin, as Mrs. Cochrane had seen it during her residence in London, was conspicuous by its absence.

It must be understood that Mrs. Cochrane had come practically direct from her little home town to London. If by chance she had gone to Chicago, New York or Seattle, for instance, she no doubt would have been just as horrified at the immorality and selfishness that is so apparent in these big cities. But fate had ordained that London was to be the city in which the good lady could show her ability as a second Carrie Nation. To Mrs. Cochrane, England and America were synonymous. She alluded to a member of parliament as a congressman, and King George as the President King; hence her remark to Steven, "Why don't Congress act."

Mrs. Cochrane, like millions of others, had a lot to learn. For instance the old truism, "fool the people and they will love you," is universal. In England a member of Parliament is one who has convinced his constituents that he is an honest man with only one object in life—to work for their interest.

In America, a Congressman is one who not only persuades the people that he is honest but actually believes himself that crookedness is abominable, but finds out after he is elected that he did not know his own virtues.

On this beautiful September afternoon quite a large crowd was gathered at Mrs. Markham's home. It was just an everyday garden party, scandal being the dominant topic. Booths had been erected on the

lawns and an outrageous band with a foreign name played various selections. Tennis, croquet, and flirting were the usual pastimes. In the dining-room such refreshments as were needed could be found; so after paying his respects to his sainted congregation, the Vicar made way to this storage to sample whatsoever appealed to his palate.

Mrs. Cochrane was very heartily welcomed by the majority. Not on account of her social position, but because she was wealthy, and for the amusement that she generally caused by her direct attack on all who crossed her path.

After having been received by their host and hostess, Mrs. Cochrane was introduced to the guests whom she had not met before. Steven made his way over to Lord Bitterne who had beckoned to him.

"Awfully glad to see you, Steven, but I do wish that you would call around a little more."

"My dear George, do you know that I have called three times at your house and five times at your club and drew a blank each time?"

"So sorry, Steven, but if you ring me up any morning before eleven I can always arrange for a meeting. By the way, is it true that you are returning to America in a few days?"

"Yes," replied Steven, "Mrs. Cochrane and I have decided to cross the Atlantic at the end of this month."

"I am sorry that you are going back so soon, Steven, I feel rather mean myself at not having had more of your company. I know that I have neglected you shamefully, but you will forgive me, old boy, I know."

"Certainly," said Steven, "I will forgive you for the simple reason that there is nothing to forgive."

"Now look here, Steven, I want Mrs. Cochrane and

you to come down to my place in Surrey, can you spend a week?"

"I shall be delighted and I can assure you, George, that Mrs. Cochrane will feel the same as I do."

"Good, we shall be together all the time. I suppose that you do not mind trotting 'round after the birds."

"Not at all," said Steven, "for although my shooting days are practically over—" looking ruefully down at his empty sleeve—"I still have enough sportman's blood left to enjoy watching a good gunman."

"Thanks, Steve, then it is all settled. I shall expect you down next Monday."

While Lord George and his friend were chatting, Mrs. Cochrane had made another hit. Among the people who had been introduced to Mrs. Cochrane was a young man by the name of Briggs, who had earned a reputation as a wit. This poor boy, not knowing, thought Mrs. Cochrane an excellent subject on which to show his skill. With a knowing wink to a few of his friends he commenced:

"Please tell me, Mrs. Cochrane. How do you feel in America since you won the war?"

Mrs. Cochrane looked him steadily in the face, "Say, young man, may I ask what you did in the war?"

"Well, you see, er—"

"Sure I can see, I expect that while your countrymen were being cut up over there you held down some government job. Ain't that so?"

Poor Briggs was not enjoying himself. "Well, I did my bit, don't you know. I was superintendent of a large farm."

"My, you don't say so. Wasn't you scared of the cows when you had to milk them?"

The amused listeners waited for his answer, but Briggs had already departed.

The Reverend Mr. Stone finding the food supply rather meagre decided to come out on the lawn and see if it was not possible to find some occasion in which to show his oratorical powers.

He found it, for Mrs. Cochrane no sooner beheld him than she went up to where he stood talking to Lord Bitterne. Lord Bitterne gave Mrs. Cochrane a smile for he anticipated something of what was coming and in a quiet manner the other guests drew near.

"Well, Parson," said Mrs. Cochrane, "where is that woman of yours?"

"My dear lady," replied the Vicar, "you really must not speak of my wife in that way."

"You said it, Parson, that's too good to speak of a woman who robs the little children of their bread. Now tell me Parson how is it that you call yourself a man of God? Why, if I was God, I would put you to cleaning out pig pens. No, I wouldn't, that would be too good for you, I would make you a bartender in one of those dirty shacks your wife owns in the back alleys. You tell that wife of yours from me, that I ain't finished with her yet. She will hear from me again, but I have something to say to you.

"Last Sunday you preached (God forgive you) about children having no father, and called them children of shame. What for? Ain't you a child of shame yourself, besides you can't prove to me or any one else here," and Mrs. Cochrane eyed her audience, "that your father was your father. I loved my mother better than anyone else in the world and I know that she was an angel, but what I want to say is, nobody can prove that they are not children of shame,

as you called those poor little children; and what's more, wasn't our Saviour illegitimate?"

The Vicar had long given up the fight. All he wanted to do was to get away as quickly as possible. He felt that words, even if he had the power to utter them, would be useless.

"Don't you let me hear you talk any more slush in church or there will be something doing. Why, Mutt and Jeff could talk better than you do. Now you beat it, go home and tell your woman what I say."

Have you ever seen a dog slink away when it has been scolded? Well, picture a fat dog, a very fat dog slinking, and you will get some idea of how the Vicar appeared as he went. He did not even stop to bid farewell, but just went.

"I guess he knows all there is to know now," said Mrs. Cochrane beaming on the crowd that surrounded her, and the crowd that so far had been dumb, burst into a roar of laughter; and many loved Mrs. Cochrane for her crude but honest truths.

Among those present was one who was too astounded even to laugh. Poor little Dick Morse had listened to Mrs. Cochrane with his heart in his mouth; for to him one who could down the Reverend Robert Stone was to be feared; consequently he kept well in the background, anxiously awaiting for a favorable opportunity to leave the party.

Steven Hargraves had a warm regard for little Dicky and while Mrs. Cochrane, who had leaped into fame by her slaying of the Philistine, was surrounded by the amused guests, he accosted Dicky, inquired after his health and taking him by the arm led him up to Mrs. Cochrane and gave the necessary introduction.

"Glad to meet you," said Mrs. Cochrane. "You

ain't much to look at but they tell me you are some preacher. I guess I shall hear you preach next Sunday morning."

Mrs. Cochrane had noticed the evident embarrassment of the little man. He looked comical peering through his glasses at her. Mrs. Cochrane had great difficulty in restraining herself from laughing. She made Dicky sit down by her side and commenced asking questions that horrified him.

"Say, Mr. Morse, how is it that some of the women folk I meet at dinner wear dresses that show so much of their bodies?"

Dicky stammered that it was possible to show their charms.

"You show me," said Mrs. Cochrane, "how a woman is going to make herself charming by putting all her goods in the store window at once."

The simile was lost on Dicky who was too amazed to answer.

"What I mean to say," went on Mrs. Cochrane, musingly, "is that a girl who has all her goods on view at once ain't likely to get a husband nearly as quick as the girl who is modest. If I was a man I wouldn't want to marry a girl who was not particular what other men saw. Why, it's indecent."

Needless to say when Mrs. Cochrane returned to America and visited some of her own big cities she realized—sadly against her will—that fashion does sometimes change.

Dicky was glad to get away from her, for he had an unpleasant idea in his head that she was quite capable of attacking him with her umbrella at the slightest provocation.

The afternoon was almost gone and the party gradually broke up. Lord Bitterne came up to Mrs. Coch-

rane just before she departed and told her that Steven had accepted an invitation on her behalf. "Very kind of you, lord, and I will be pleased to come down; but say when are you going to settle down? Why can't you find some little girl and make her your wife?" Lord Bitterne replied that he would be only too glad to get married but no one seemed to want him, so he supposed that he should have to cross over to America again after all.

"Don't worry about that, Lord. Believe me American girls don't want a man like you fooling after them. What they need is a man who can be satisfied with one little girlie and not waste his time running after every pretty face he sees."

Lord Bitterne was highly amused at Mrs. Cochrane's description of his gaiety and laughingly replied that every man had to sow his wild oats.

"Say, Lord, tell me what ground have you got left to sow your good oats in; for believe me you have sown enough wild oats to feed all the cattle in America for the next twenty years. But I'll talk to you when I come down to your place. Goodbye, Lordship, now watch your step, my lad," and Mrs. Cochrane taking Steven by the arm departed, leaving Lord George with a grin of amusement on his face which after a time faded as he thought that after all Mrs. Cochrane was right and that his past life was indeed pretty well choked with weeds.

XVIII

John Keen had become almost as well known to the inhabitants of Cross Keys Passages as the constable who was stationed on Cross Keys beat, with a difference of course, for while the constable was hated with that fervent hatred born of crime, John was admired and respected. He had made a number of firm friends and did what he could to alleviate the rotten conditions that constantly prevailed in that degraded quarter.

One couple by the name of Grey had been the especial care of John. The husband was an old sergeant who had served in France and previous to his enlistment had been a shoemaker. On returning from the war he found that the demand for shoes had become so limited on account of the high prices that he was obliged to seek occupation elsewhere. Eventually he opened a small green grocer's store at the corner of a street running parallel with the Passages, and managed to eke out a doubtful existence. His abode, however, was in Cross Keys. His wife was a frail little woman who worked early and late helping her husband who had soon become disgusted with the conditions that existed in that particular quarter of London and sought solace in drink.

John had several talks with Grey and had persuaded him to sign the pledge. Sergeant Grey soon found that by leaving drink severely alone and attending to his store things were not so bad after all. Mrs. Grey loved John for his kindly influence, for she was devoted to her husband and the strain of having to run a

business and look after a drunken husband, had not tended to improve her health. Both Mr. and Mrs. Grey promised John that they would attend his church, and the previous Sunday John had looked in vain for them.

It was the following Saturday morning and John was just about to start for a visit to Cross Keys, as he had not been able to go during the week, when the landlady announced a visitor. To John's surprise no less a person than William Smith was shown into the room.

"Good morning, Captain, I 'opes you'll excuse me but I 'ave come on partickler business," said William.

"I am always glad to see you, William, come as often as you wish," replied John shaking him by the hand. "Now sit down and let me hear your news."

"Well, Governor, it's like this 'ere. That bloke who you knows of, he kicked his missus so damned 'ard that she's going to croak."

John was by this time familiar with the language of Cross Keys and thoroughly understood what William was saying.

"Am I to understand that one of you has kicked his wife so badly that she may die?"

"Yes, Cap, but it ain't me. I ain't got no missus, thank Gawd, and I wouldn't know what to do wif one if I did. You take my tip, Captain, and don't get tied up. Women's all right when they ain't yourn, but Gawd 'elp yer if yer as 'em tied rahnd yer neck. W'y, who'd 'a thought that Bob Grey would boot his missus—"

But John was on his feet with a look of horror on his face that made Bill feel awed. John took up his hat and silently beckoning to William they left the house. Not a word was spoken during their walk to

Cross Keys. John strode along, his face set in pain, while Bill followed in the rear.

On arriving at the home of Mrs. Grey, John met the doctor just leaving.

"Just in time, Mr. Keen," said the doctor in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Is there no hope for her?" John asked.

"Not the slightest," replied the doctor. "She has received a heavy blow in the side which has fractured her ribs and they have penetrated her lung. She is too ill to move; but in any case it would make no difference for nothing could save her. It is only a question of a few hours at the most."

John left the doctor still speaking and quietly entered the house.

Poor Mrs. Grey was lying on her bed with such a look of agony on her face that John was fain to turn away his eyes for a minute or two.

"Oh, sir," gasped Mrs. Grey, "I am glad you have come. Will you pray for me?"

John knelt down by her side and prayed in a simple way that God would lead his sister into the valley of peace. He rose to his feet at the conclusion of his prayer and taking a chair, sat down by her side and tried to comfort this poor dying woman.

The other person in the room was an elderly female, a drink-sodden wretch, who had spent the night with Mrs. Grey; for in the heart of woman is something that cannot be defined and the nearest we can get to that something is God.

John asked for Mr. Grey, but a warning look from the old woman made him silent. Just then two men came into the room and John immediately recognized police officers. Kindly men in their way, for they made as little noise as possible, and the elder of the two

spoke in a quiet voice to Mrs. Grey and asked her how the accident happened.

"I fell downstairs," said Mrs. Grey.

"Well, in that case I suppose that it was just an ordinary accident after all; but we heard, you know, that some man had kicked you."

"It's a lie, it's a lie," moaned the poor woman, "I fell down I tell you, please sir, I fell down."

John clasped her by the hand for he knew now that her husband was responsible for her accident.

The officers rose to depart and the inspector patted her gently on the hand, "Cheer up, Mrs. Grey, you will soon get well again."

"But I fell down, I tell you."

"That's all right, Mrs. Grey, your word is accepted," said the inspector, "so we shall not be down here again."

A look of relief came over her face when she understood that it was accepted by the police that it was an accident.

John gently spoke of God's love to the poor dying woman.

"My Bob wouldn't hurt me, sir, would you Bob? Oh my God, stop this pain, it's killing me. All right Bob dear, we will go to church. Don't hit me, Bob. Oh, the pain." Then opening her eyes she looked at John and smiled—and smiling she passed away.

John could not believe at first that this little woman who a few days ago was so grateful to him, was now no more. Then he thought of her beloved lies. Beautiful jewels of heaven, John thought them.

"Oh, God, teach men to reverence women; for Thy greatest handiwork was the creation of a helpmate for man."

John's heart was heavy with sorrow for he could not

understand how it could be possible for this man Grey to commit such a dastardly act. A step sounded on the stairs and Bob Grey slunk into the room, but such a Bob Grey. His eyes were bloodshot, his face inflamed with drink.

"Come on, get up, you're shamming. Come on Lizzie," he pleaded. "God's truth I wouldn't hurt you." Then he noticed John.

"You bloody hypocrite, you blasted—"

"Hush," said John, "your poor wife is dead."

"Dead!" echoed Bob. "My God, Lizzie, come back, old pal," and sobbing as though his heart would break he flung himself down beside the wife he had murdered. John Keen could not speak. From his very heart he was praying for this man. The man's sobs quieted after awhile and he rose to his feet.

"You," said he looking at John, "you and your bloody church made me do this. Listen, last Sunday morning me and my Liz came to your church and we was told that people like us wasn't wanted. Yes, the bloke there turned us away. I went straight into the nearest pub and stayed there till I was too drunk to remember that I ain't wanted in church and then I must have come home and kicked my Liz," and he dropped to his knees by her side and kissed her face while his great form shook with passionate utterances.

John rose to his feet and staggered out into the Passages like a drunken man. His face was white and set. He made his way to St. Martha's and accosted the verger.

"Did you refuse admittance to this church last Sunday morning to a man and his wife?"

"Yes, sir," replied the verger and John raised his hand to strike him to the earth when the verger went

on: "You see sir, the Vicar gave me strict orders that I was not to admit any poor people into the church. He said if I did he would discharge me, and—" But he was talking to the empty air for John had already departed.

He went directly to Regents Park and asked to see the Vicar.

"The Vicar is away, sir, but there is a letter here which was to be delivered to you so if you wish, sir, I will give it to you," said the butler.

John took it like a man in a dream and slowly wended his way homeward. It was some weeks afterwards before John realized that had the Vicar been at home, he would have killed him.

When John reached home he opened the letter and read:

"My dear Brother:

I am called away to my place in Hampshire and cannot get back before noon tomorrow. Will you arrange for Morse to take the morning service? And I should like you to officiate at Evensong; for my dear boy, I really shall not have time to look up a sermon but I shall be able to read the lessons for you Sunday evening."

Would he preach in the evening? Yes he would, but it would be his last sermon. From now on the Church and he were forever separated by that deep gulf, hypocrisy.

He would go out to Frank Greymarsh. Perhaps there he would be able to make a living. But what of Margaret? How could he leave her? And sinking on his knees John bowed his head in prayer and besought God to guide him.

He was disturbed by someone knocking on the door.

"Come in," said John, and in walked Mrs. Cochrane and Margaret. Both immediately became aware that something was wrong for John certainly looked ill.

"Land sakes, boy, you ought to be in bed," said Mrs. Cochrane.

Margaret crossed swiftly to his side and kissed him, hugging him fondly and soothing him.

"Oh, boy!" said Mrs. Cochrane. "I am tickled to death. If I had to choose a husband for my Margaret, you sure are that lad. Now if you take my advice you'll just marry this sweet girl before somebody else beats you to it."

"Dear Mrs. Cochrane," said Margaret, "John is the only man in the world for me, but he is so proud that he will not ask me to share his life because he is poor. Why, I would glory in sharing your poverty, John. But I am forgetting. What is the matter, dearest, you do not look well?"

John then told them what had happened that day, and his visitors were horrified at his story; and when John described how these two poor people had come to church happy and contented that they were doing something that was right, and how they had been turned away from the house of God, Mrs. Cochrane could contain herself no longer.

"God help this parson when I see him," said Mrs. Cochrane, "for I will surely smash my umbrella over his head."

"Dear, dear John, I know how you feel; but dear, I would not worry too much for God will surely punish this man Stone for his sins."

"True, Margaret dear, but the pain hurts just the same."

"Now I want you, Mrs. Cochrane, to keep calm, please do not attempt anything rash. On Sunday evening I am preaching at St. Martha's. It will be my last sermon in this so-called House of God and I am going to tell the truth. God help me, and may our Father grant that what I shall say may be the means of helping in a small way to purify and cleanse His Holy Temple; for like our Lord and Master, I shall use a whip and overthrow the heathen."

XIX

The attendance at St. Martha's on a Sunday morning was generally limited. Eleven was by far too early for the majority of society butterflies; they much preferred to be taking their morning cup of tea lying back among the pillows than bowing their heads in worship. In the evening they did not mind spending the usual hour worshipping God; after all, you know, it was only in form to attend church once a week. Consequently little Dicky Morse preached to more empty pews than persons.

No little excitement and expectation was caused when John Keen, after giving out the notices said, "I wish to inform this congregation that I shall preach my farewell sermon this evening, as I am leaving St. Martha's; and I hope that as many of you as possible will endeavor to be present. I have something to say that concerns the welfare of this church."

The announcement that John Keen was leaving St. Martha's came as a bombshell to its adherents and speculation was rife as to why and wherefore. The meagre attendance carried the news to other houses and in consequence there threatened to be a record gathering that evening.

Steven Hargraves, who had spoken to John the previous evening, knew very well that the sermon which he intended preaching would astonish, not only the saintly members who were bound to be present, but the whole of London.

Steven had become acquainted with a Mr. McClumpha, editor of the Morning News, who after receiving a hint from Steven as to what would probably take place, made up his mind that he would be present.

The editor of the Morning News was more feared by both politicians and society in general than any other man in town. He had come to London forty years ago; a poor, starving Scotch boy and he never forgot his early struggles for a livelihood or the bitter contempt he had received from those who considered that the poor were a necessary evil. Mr. McClumpha never lost an opportunity of attacking the useless fraternity who styled themselves "Society."

The church was crowded. Pews that had long since been neglected were comfortably well filled. There was not an empty seat. Margaret Hinton and Mrs. Cochrane sat together while Steven and Mr. McClumpha sat more forward so as not to lose any word of John's sermon.

The Vicar and his beloved wife entered the church just as the service was about to commence. They had been delayed somewhat by a blow-out on the road and only reached London in time for a hurried meal and then went straight to St. Martha's. It is highly probable that they would not have gone to church had they not received the news on their arrival that John Keen had made his startling announcement at the morning service.

"Dear me," said the Vicar, "I do hope that he is not going to say anything unpleasant. Do you know, my dear, that I shall not be sorry when

he is gone? His ideas are so extraordinary and he actually reads 'John Bull.' "

Mrs. Stone lifted her hands in horror; and well she might for the editor of this excellent paper had found occasion to call her to order more than once, and had even gone so far as to suggest that beer and the Church had nothing in common until Mrs. Stone bestowed her hand on the Reverend Robert. Mrs. Stone had been furious and had immediately consulted her lawyer with the view of suing for damages, but her lawyer had already lost several such cases connected with the same periodical and soon convinced Mrs. Stone that her case was groundless.

The service proceeded as usual; little Dicky Morse saying the prayers. Then after a hymn, John entered the pulpit and there was a silence that was profound.

"My text tonight is one that is familiar to you all, and I would to God that its meaning had become known to you many years ago—The Wages of Sin Is Death. I am not speaking of death hereafter, but of death here, now.

"The wages of sin is death in this world. Death to your hopes and ambitions; death to your better selves; death to the sanctity of the home; death to the innocent.

"I am going to tell you what I have seen sin, in all its hideousness, do since I have come among you. A few weeks ago I had occasion to visit a neighborhood within your parish and directly under the jurisdiction of your Vicar. This miserable district is called Cross Keys Passages. It is the home of vice, of crime, of immorality; and you are directly responsible. In this hellish dis-

trict are two public houses, so dirty and so ill-kept that no farmer would herd pigs in them. They are owned by the wife of your Vicar. The money which pays for the beer purchased in these houses is got by crime and by prostitution, and this money eventually finds its way into the pockets of the woman who owns them."

There was a breathless silence and more than one listener would gladly have stayed away. At the beginning of John Keen's attack on her property, Mrs. Stone had fallen sideways onto the cushions in her pew and fainted.

"A short time ago," continued John, "I saw the death of a little girl. She had been ruined and cast aside and, like a good many more of her unfortunate sisters, she had drifted to Cross Keys Passages. She died of a disease so foul and yet so pitiful that I dare not utter it.

"The man who was responsible for this little girl's downfall is the owner of this degraded district of Cross Keys and a member of this church. A Mr. Molstein."

The silence if anything seemed to grow more intense. The face of Mr. Molstein had turned from white to grey and was now a sickly yellow. Only one man in the congregation was smiling and that was Mr. McClumpha who with his notebook in hand was busy taking down every word of John's sermon. There was joy in his heart. He would publish it in the morning edition as preached, word for word, for he realized that every word John uttered was the truth.

"I know many ladies here present who to the world and to their husbands are virtuous wives, but are just as immoral as the poor, be-powdered,

over-dressed women who nightly ply their ghastly trade in our streets. I know of scores of men here present who in the eyes of the world are model husbands, yet night after night they commit adultery."

There was a stir in the congregation at these words. One old gentleman sitting directly in front of Mrs. Cochrane rose to his feet to protest, when Mrs. Cochrane jerked him back again with the handle of her umbrella.

"You stand up again," she whispered fiercely, "and I will beat your head off."

Margaret was crying at the splendidness of her lover. She never realized how much she loved John until now.

"Do you know," went on John, "that last Sunday two poor people came to this church and were refused admittance because they were poorly dressed, and going away from the church door, heartbroken to think that the Church of God was barred to them, the man got hopelessly drunk, while the poor dear woman died yesterday morning? Her husband was arrested last night for manslaughter. I want to tell you that this man's wife was just as foully, as cruelly, as brutally murdered by your miserable Vicar as the little children of Belgium were murdered by the Huns.

"For all the sins you commit, rest assured you must pay the price. Not necessarily in this world but in the next. The women who have proved unfaithful to their husbands are to be pitied. It is the husbands who are to blame, for do they not leave their wives alone at home while they in turn seek the neglected wives of other men? The result is obvious.

"During the four years I spent in France among our brave troops, I saw many a soul pass over the great divide, and from the depths of my heart I can say that there was not one of these dear lads that did not die with a sure and certain hope of a great God of love awaiting them.

"I could not name twenty here tonight who are fit to join these comrades of mine." John then exhorted them to have a little kindness, and a little sympathy for suffering humanity. He prayed that the men present would remember their sacred marriage vows.

Then John pulled off his vestments and tore off his collar, saying, "These were meant to be an emblem of Christ. Behold they have become a badge of shame. Never again will I wear them, for under these emblems live some of the greatest hypocrites in the world, your Vicar among them."

John seemed very weary as he uttered these words, and his face had grown pale. Turning towards the altar he said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," and stepping down from the pulpit he made his way into the vestry and from thence into the street.

As John left the pulpit nearly everybody rose. There was talking in angry voices and more than once the expression, "Action for libel" was heard.

Mrs. Cochrane had been firmly grasping her umbrella for the last ten minutes. When John had mentioned the name of Molstein, he had pointed an accusing finger directly at him, and with joy in her heart Mrs. Cochrane at last knew Mr. Molstein. Rising with the others she went

over to where Molstein was sitting, for he at any rate felt too shaken to rise, and Mrs. Cochrane without uttering a word brought down her umbrella across his head, not once, but again and again. There was blood in her eyes. So this was the reptile who sent girls to the streets, eh! Molstein tried to ward off the blows but he was powerless. Mrs. Cochrane was a husky woman weighing over two hundred pounds and every time she struck Molstein he thought that his last hour had come. He tried to dodge her, but it was of no avail and Mrs. Cochrane beat him to her heart's content, winding up by inserting the crook of her umbrella in his collar and tearing the shirt and waistcoat almost from off him. Having satisfied her desires, she cast around for fresh prey and sighted the vicar, but the vicar also sighted her and before she could get anywhere near him he was racing as fast as a taxi could take him in the direction of his home, leaving his beloved wife to the care of Providence.

Steven got Mrs. Cochrane out of the church with great difficulty for she was exhausted and was now crying bitterly. Margaret came home with them and helped get Mrs. Cochrane to bed. Once there Mrs. Cochrane's old spirit of cheerfulness came back and she laughed until the tears again came into her eyes.

"I bet that guy don't want to see me no more, my dear. I sure gave him something to carry on with," and Margaret was obliged to laugh with Mrs. Cochrane at the ludicrous figure of Mr. Molstein.

The evening was getting late, so kissing Mrs. Cochrane good night, Margaret asked Steven to get her a taxi, and returned home.

XX

When Margaret arrived home she was astonished to find her chaperon in tears.

"Oh, Miss Hinton, I have just received a telegram from my brother at Richmond. He is very ill and wants me to go to him."

"I am sorry, Mrs. Nelson, but don't waste time, dear," said Margaret sympathetically. "Let us see if it is possible for you to catch a train tonight."

On consulting the A. B. C. Railway Guide, Margaret was able to inform Mrs. Nelson that she would just have time to catch the eleven-thirty train from Broad Street Station. She helped her pack a few things and 'phoned for a taxi.

"Good bye, dear Mrs. Nelson, stay as long as you wish and I do hope that your brother will soon be well again."

When Mrs. Nelson had left, Margaret, after locking the door of her flat, proceeded to disrobe. She looked very pretty as she sat before her mirror clad in her night robes. She felt very tired and oh, so very miserable, as she sat musing over the events of the evening. She thought how splendidly John had spoken and then came the sad, sad, thought; he had wrecked his career and only God knew when he would be in a position to ask her to marry him. The clock striking the hour, Margaret realized with a start that it was midnight and kicking off her slippers she

was in the act of creeping into bed when there was a knock at her door.

Hastily donning a dressing gown, she went to the door, "Who is there?" she cried.

"Only me, Miss, please let me see you," answered a girl's voice.

Margaret immediately opened the door and saw standing before her a young girl of about twenty-three or four who appeared to be laboring under some great emotion.

"Come in," said Margaret. "Please sit down and tell me what I can do for you."

Lily Mears was a splendid actress and in a voice broken with sobs she told Margaret a pitiful tale of having been driven from home by her stepfather who had treated her very cruelly since her mother died.

"I heard you sing at a concert once, Miss, and a few days ago I saw you enter this house. You have such a kind face, I felt sure that you would help me if ever I needed help."

"There, there, dear, don't worry; fortunately my friend has been called away this evening. You shall have her bed, so please take off your hat while I make you a cup of tea. A good night's rest and you will feel much better. In the morning we will see what can be done for you."

What a nuisance is conscience. Lily Mears would have very readily given hers away at that moment. She recognized the genuine sympathy of this woman and her heart was already beginning to fail her.

"Don't be a fool," said Lily to herself, "you have got to live and it means five pounds for you, and after all there will be no great harm done."

Lily Mears was just on the point of giving up her mission when Margaret returned with a tray daintily set with two cups of tea and some biscuits.

"There, dear," said Margaret, "drink this tea and eat a little, it will do you good. I will join you in drinking a cup of tea."

Margaret placed the tray on the table and returned to the kitchen to put out the light, and Lily, stifling the voice of her better self, hastily bent forward. There was a slight movement of her hand and the deed was done.

When Margaret entered the room, Lily was sipping her tea with evident enjoyment. Margaret took her own cup and slowly drained it while Lily watched her with frightened and astonished eyes. She wished now that she had never come here. It was all very well to tell her that there was to be no harm done to Margaret. Lily knew the ghastly secrets of her employers only too well.

"I am feeling so sleepy, dear," said Margaret, "do you mind if I lie down?" and without waiting for an answer she staggered through the curtains to her bed and falling across it was immediately asleep.

"Well," said Lily bitterly, "this is my last job for Mrs. Schmidt. After this I will pull straight." She crossed over to the window and pulled up one of the blinds for a few minutes and then pulled it down again. Shortly after there was a knock at the door and Lily opened it.

Lord Bitterne stood there, his eyes shining with a passion that even Lily had never seen before. He caught sight of Margaret through the cur-

tained doorway and with a bound he was by her side and had her in his arms while he rained passionate kisses on her lips, her eyes, her neck.

Lily Mears stood watching him when Lord Bitterne happened to look up and saw her.

"All right, girl, you may go," he said, and then the womanhood of Lily Mears, long since dormant, suddenly blazed into light.

"Don't you believe it. I am not going," she cried, "but you are. Go now or I'll scream for help."

"For God's sake, girl, control yourself. What is the matter?" said Lord Bitterne in an agitated voice, laying Margaret back on her bed and going towards Lily.

"Don't you touch me, but go! I am bad, God knows, but this woman is not and I am not going to let you touch her."

"Oh, nonsense, girl, I wouldn't harm her for the world. Go away. There's a good girl."

Lily refused to budge, however, and Lord Bitterne, his brain on fire, turned again to Margaret and tried to take her up in his arms.

And then Lily screamed.

Lord Bitterne dropped Margaret as though he had been shot and rushed towards the door when it was flung open and John Keen stood facing him. Silence, perfect silence. John Keen looked at Lord Bitterne and then he saw Margaret lying on the bed. And then he saw nothing but red.

There were real screams now and in a very short time the room was filled with other residents of the house. John Keen had Lord Bitterne by the throat and Lord Bitterne was more

than half way to death when he was literally torn away from John Keen by main force.

Lord Bitterne's face was ashy, blood was oozing from his mouth and he was gasping for breath. The people, inhabitants of the other flats, repeatedly asked what was the matter. Lily Mears was thoroughly frightened, for if the police were called in it would be a very serious matter for her; so mustering up her courage she gave them to understand that the man Bitterne had forced his way into the flat and insulted John Keen. They appeared satisfied with her explanation and departed grumbling about midnight brawls taking place and disturbing their rest.

Lord Bitterne had disappeared and was now almost at his home, for he was indeed a sick man in more ways than one.

When the last person had left the room Lily drew back the curtains that divided the bedroom from the living-room, for when John Keen had seized Lord Bitterne by the throat she had unconsciously drawn them together, which had proved a blessing, for no one had seen Margaret lying asleep on her bed, otherwise things might have turned out quite different.

John Keen sank into a chair. His face was ghastly and Lily felt horribly frightened. She dared not speak, but just stood and watched John Keen. How long she had been standing there she did not know, when the silence was broken by Margaret asking for something to drink. John sprang to his feet and entered her bedroom. Margaret was still heavy with sleep and did not recognize him.

"Mr. Keen," said Lily, "don't you know me?"

I am Lily Mears. We used to go to school together."

But John Keen was like one in a trance. He was suffering great pain, for he thought that Lord Bitterne had ruined Margaret.

"John, dear, is it you?" cried Margaret who had at last recognized him. "What are you doing here? Am I ill, dear?"

John crossed over to the bed and took Margaret by the hand.

"Speak to me, John," cried Margaret in a voice of terror. "What is the matter?"

And then kindly nature came to John's relief, and throwing himself on his knees he sobbed as though his heart would break, while Margaret put her arms around his neck and tried to comfort him.

It seemed a long time before he was quieted, and then he looked at Lily Mears and spoke. It sounded like the voice of another man than that of John Keen. "I want you to tell me what happened," he said.

"I will. Believe me, I will. But first of all listen, Miss Hinton is all right. Nobody harmed her, for I screamed."

A mad rush of joy came to John and he crushed Margaret to his breast and kissed her again and again. "Oh, God," he cried, "I thank Thee, I thank Thee." Margaret seemed so happy as John held her close and wondered what it was all about. It seemed to her like a strange dream.

"Mr. Keen and Miss Hinton," said Lily looking first at John and then at Margaret. "I want you to hear my story and judge me as you would like God to judge you.

"Mr. Keen, do you remember when we went to school together, in our little village?"

"I cannot just call you to mind," said John, "but your face certainly seems familiar."

"I am Lily Mears."

"Lily Mears! Of course I remember you now; but you were such a shy little girl in those days while now—"

"You needn't say it, Mr. Keen. God forgive me, I wish with all my heart that I had never left Wickham. Mother got me a place here in London. I was governess at a place in Fulham and very happy. One evening I met a gentleman who made love to me. Like a fool I believed him and it was not long before I was obliged to leave my situation to hide my shame."

"My baby was born prematurely and only lived a few hours. Then I was obliged to look for another situation, but no one wanted a girl who could not give references."

"Eventually I met a woman, a she-devil if there ever was one. She took me home with her and gave me pretty clothes to wear and night after night she forced me to—" And here Lily broke down and cried bitterly.

"Then," said Lily, "Mrs. Schmidt gave me other work to do. She used to procure invitations to parties and my work was to try and find out how many of the married ladies were really happy and whether there were any that needed money. For God's sake, don't condemn me, but scores of names I have taken to Mrs. Schmidt and she has done the rest."

Margaret was looking at Lily with compassion in her eyes.

"Yesterday," continued Lily, "I was told to come here this evening and beg for help and then I was to drug this young lady and leave her." There was no compassion in Margaret's eyes now, only horror. "I did drug her, but I could not go on with it, so I stayed and saved her, Mr. Keen. She is as pure today as yesterday."

Margaret gave a cry and swooned away in John's arms.

"You may go, Lily, I forgive you with all my heart, little girl, for after all you have saved Margaret, but," and here John's voice grew stern, "I will drag this woman to the police court and expose her."

"No, no, Mr. Keen," cried Lily piteously, "you must not. Don't you see it would mean prison for me? And oh, Mr. Keen, I do so want to be good again."

"You are right, Lily," said John, "but please help Miss Hinton to bed and I will wait in the next room."

Margaret, however, was recovering from her swoon and smiled rather weakly at John.

"You must go, dear," she said, "and John you must not worry. I'm safe now."

"I dare not leave you in your weak state, Margaret. Where is Mrs. Nelson?"

"Mrs. Nelson," replied Lily Mears, "was called away by a false telegram, but Miss Hinton, will you trust me for once? Let me try to show how bitterly penitent I am. Let me stay with you until Mrs. Nelson comes back."

"I will, dear," said Margaret.

John took Margaret in his arms again and said, "Little girl, I want you to marry me as soon as

possible, for I am going out to America, dear. We shall be bitterly poor at first, but please God, I shall succeed. Will you come, dear?"

And Margaret's answer was, "Look into my eyes, dear," and she kissed him long and tenderly.

XXI

On Monday the Morning News was selling rapidly. Mr. McClumpha had sat up until three A. M. writing a description of the evening service at St. Martha's, and John Keen's sermon, with the names of those whom John had mentioned appearing in bold type.

London was delighted, of course, especially that community half way between the peerage and the slums. Mr. McClumpha received that morning 'phone calls too numerous to mention, some congratulating him, while several mentioned action for libel, but the editor of the Morning News only smiled.

Mrs. Cochrane read the account lying in bed, for she was not feeling very well. The excitement of the previous evening had been too much for her. She was rather disappointed to see no mention of her assault on Molstein, but Mr. McClumpha, while he enjoyed seeing the wretch soundly thrashed, was too discreet to bring Mrs. Cochrane into the limelight.

After finishing her breakfast, Mrs. Cochrane sent for Steven.

"Say, Steve boy, I think I shall rest today; but you go down to Lord Bitterne's place, I will come down on Wednesday."

Steven replied that he would rather stay with her until she was well again.

"Oh, shucks, boy, I ain't no chicken. You just run down and join your friend." So Steven

went down to Oak Park. A car was there to meet him for he had wired to Lord Bitterne telling him that he would arrive by the three o'clock train.

Steven was delighted with the beautiful surroundings of the country home of Lord Bitterne. The house was built during the reign of Queen Elizabeth and the beautiful terraces and velvet lawns were perfectly planned.

After Steven had been shown to his room and bathed his hands and face, he descended to the drawing-room and was introduced by his host to a number of people. He thought that Lord Bitterne did not seem to be quite himself, for his manner was strange and nervous and his face pale.

Among those present was Mary Richards, and after greeting Steven she offered to show him the gardens. He gladly consented. He liked Mary Richards and found her an intelligent companion. They strolled through the grounds admiring the beautiful flowers and the wonderful Italian garden. The afternoon was very warm and in England the month of September is nearly always the best and brightest month of the year. Coming to a summer house they sat down and Mary suddenly burst into tears.

"Why, Miss Richards, what is the matter?" cried Steven in alarm.

"Nothing very much, Mr. Hargraves, but George has again asked me to marry him and I know that I can never be his wife now; and Mr. Hargraves, I would give my soul to marry him."

This sounded like a paradox to Steven, for

while he knew that Lord Bitterne was far from being perfect he wondered why Mary Richards should want his friend so much and yet refuse to marry him.

"No," went on Mary, "if he had asked me yesterday I know I should have gladly consented to become his wife; but after the events of last night I realize that it is impossible."

Steven wondered what had taken place the preceding evening that prevented Miss Richards from accepting Lord Bitterne, but he held his peace.

"Shall we return to the house, Mr. Hargraves?" said Mary. "It is nearly five-thirty and we dine down here at six."

Steven offered his arm and they retraced their steps towards the house. They met Lord Bitterne on the terrace and Steven noticed that he was looking at them rather strangely. It was time to dress, however, so Steven made to his room and proceeded to go through the usual labor of dressing up like a waiter. If there was one thing that Steven disliked it was having to dress nearly every evening of his stay in England.

But tonight he smiled while struggling with a refractory collar, for only a few days longer and then good old New York. Gee, he would be glad. He would go out every evening about seven o'clock and sit down to supper in the same old clothes. For after all the custom of donning evening clothes, handed down to us from a remote period, is certainly a useless one.

The gong sounded, and on reaching the drawing-room Steven was asked by Lady Vermont to take a young lady in to dinner by the name of Miss Sadler, who gave Steven to understand that

she was eighteen and had never been engaged. So Steven looked forward to a fairly pleasant evening.

The English aristocracy do not take nearly so long to eat when they are staying in the country as they do in town. It is just one of those mysteries that no one can fathom. In town an hour and a half seems about the usual time to fill their larders, while in the country they can perform the same operation in forty-five minutes.

After dinner Steven, asking his companion to excuse him for a few minutes, went to his room to get some cigarettes. He met the butler in the hall who handed him a letter.

"It has just come by special messenger, sir," he said.

Steven recognized the handwriting of Mrs. Cochrane and with a certain amount of alarm he opened it and read. It was only a page or so but it told Steven of the dastardly attempt to ruin Margaret Hinton. "So come right home, boy. Don't stay with that wretch." Steven was astounded. How could it be possible? Surely, Mrs. Cochrane must be mistaken; and then he thought of what Mary Richards had said—"After the event of last night I can never marry him."

Steven sought out Mary Richards and led her on to the terrace.

"Miss Richards," he said in a quiet voice, "I have just received a letter from Mrs. Cochrane and she tells me of something that happened last night connected with Lord Bitterne."

Mary turned her head away.

"Miss Richards, this story that I have read, is it true?"

"Yes," said Mary in a whisper, "God help him, it is true."

Steven left her and went in search of Lord Bitterne. The guests were at bridge and the terrace was almost deserted. He found Lord Bitterne and looked him steadily in the face, but Lord Bitterne turned his face away in shame.

"I am leaving your house right now, damn you for a cowardly swine! You may thank God that Miss Hinton is no relation of mine," and turning on his heels he went to his room and proceeded to pack.

Lord Bitterne sat alone where Steven had left him and cursed the day he was born. How bitterly he regretted his past life. Why had he not fought against the evil spirit that had overcome his better nature? Why did not God give him strength to resist? He had prayed enough but no help ever seemed to come.

Just then Lord Bitterne caught sight of the sun going down and watched the various hues as the hills were first purple then blue. Lord Bitterne had the soul of an artist and very often he would take up the brush, and some of his canvases showed more than ordinary talent. Just then he noted a faint pink line that was slowly sinking into a purple directly beneath it and he wondered what the combination would be when the two colors met.

He was disturbed in his reverie by the butler.

"A letter has just arrived for your Lordship. It was brought down by your agent."

Lord Bitterne took it and dismissed the butler and continued to watch the colors in the sky while he slowly opened the letter. It was some

minutes before he gave it a thought, for the sky was beautiful. With a sigh, Lord Bitterne took up the letter and read:

“Your Lordship will be pleased to know that at last we have found trace of your mother, the Lady Nancy Bitterne, but we regret to say that she died some five months after leaving your father.”

Lord Bitterne was crying; how his eyes hurt him tonight; he would have to see a doctor about them later on.

“Dear, dear mother, I wish that you had lived, but thank God! you did not have to face a life of poverty.”

Then he read on!

“We have very great pleasure in informing your Lordship that before Lady Bitterne died she gave birth to a daughter, your sister, who is still living.”

His sister, his own dear sister; how wonderful, and then he read on!

“She was brought up by the good woman who took care of your mother and was well cared for. She became a singer of some note and today is known as Margaret Hinton.”

Crash! bang! bang! Why they must be in action again. Funny that they did not call him. Probably some German sub. He would turn out and see what it was all about. He reached out his hand and touched a rose bush and then he remembered. His soul sank into Hell. In this brief moment of remembrance he suffered keen torture.

Mary Richards was walking on the terrace in the warm twilight air. She noticed Lord Bitterne sitting there and turned to go back when she caught sight of his face. With a cry she was beside him, and throwing herself on her knees she looked into his face.

"What is it, dear, you look very ill? George, dear, it is Mary. Speak to me for God's sake!" cried Mary piteously, for the face of Lord Bitterne was like that of a dead man.

Lord Bitterne never answered, but let his hand rest on her head. Mary seemed contented that it should be so and knelt there.

"Mary," it was only the faintest of whispers, but Mary heard.

"Yes, yes, dear," she cried, "what is it?"

"Read that letter."

Mary glanced down at his feet and seeing the letter, picked it up and read it with difficulty in the growing darkness. And then Mary understood.

All her womanly sympathy went out for this boy. How awful, his own sister. But, thank God, the crime did not happen.

"George, dear, do you still want me to marry you?"

For answer, George bent down and kissed her.

"Very well, dear, just as soon as you wish; but dearest one, don't grieve. Look at the beautiful sky."

"I can't see it. My God! I am blind," cried Lord Bitterne.

Mary knew that her future husband would never see again. The doctors had warned him

that any sudden shock would leave him totally blind.

It was almost dark now and the heavy dew was falling, but still they remained. Lord Bitterne gazing with sightless eyes towards the distant hills while Mary remained on her knees, her head in his lap.

There was a step on the gravel sidewalk. It was Steven leaving. He was passing them when Mary called to him. He went up to where they were sitting and was amazed to see Mary kneeling at the feet of Lord Bitterne.

"Is that you, Steve?" said George.

"Yes," replied Steven.

"Mr. Hargraves," said Mary, "I have just promised to marry George and, Mr. Hargraves, George has just received a letter from his solicitors. They have found out that his mother is dead and she left a little girl. Her name is Margaret Hinton and, God help us, George is blind."

It was Steven now of old New York days, his one arm around his friend.

"Don't worry, old chap, don't worry. Miss Richards, God bless you," and Steven stooped and kissed her head. George gripped Steven by the hand.

"Goodbye, Steve, try to think well of me, won't you?"

"Surely, George, I will old chap, don't worry any more."

"And Steve," said Lord Bitterne, "will you call and tell my sister?"

"Yes, George, I will. Goodbye," and Steven walked slowly away.

Both Steven and George at that moment were

thinking of John Keen's words of the previous evening, "For the wages of sin is death, death to your hopes; death to your ambitions; death to your better self."

Lord Bitterne remained in the same position. It was past midnight before they were discovered and it was a house of sorrow that night.

XXII

It was past midnight when Steven arrived in London and calling a taxi he went straight home to bed, but not to sleep. Poor Steven was too sad to sleep. He felt just a little bitter towards the great Creator, for he knew that no punishment would be harder for Lord Bitterne to bear than total blindness. He sat in his room thinking until it was daylight and then went out in the cool morning air for a stroll.

For years afterward he would look back on that evening, and deep thought had shown him that God was very merciful after all: if nothing had prevented the mad infatuation for Margaret last Sunday, something a million times more awful than a man losing his sight would have happened. A sweet girl would have been robbed of her virtue, by her own brother. Steven knew that only God could ever cure his friend of his terrible failing, and God had cured him. Never again would Lord Bitterne look on a pretty face to desire it.

Steven returned to the house in time for breakfast and was delighted to see Mrs. Cochrane at the table.

"Hello, Steve boy, you don't live on a farm any more. What did you get up so early for?"

Steven replied that he could not sleep.

"I don't suppose that you could," said Mrs. Cochrane, "coming straight from that awful wretch."

"Hush," said Steven, "something terrible has happened, Mrs. Cochrane. I will tell you about it after breakfast."

Mrs. Cochrane immediately noticed how sad Steven was looking and quietly finished her breakfast.

When they had finished, Steven told Mrs. Cochrane the sad story, and she was dumbfounded.

"Poor boy," she sobbed, "ain't it just awful? But, Steve, wouldn't it have been terrible if—"

"Yes," said Steven, "I realize that George has got off light after all; but Mrs. Cochrane, I am going to see Lady Margaret. Will you come with me?"

"Why sure, boy, but who is Lady Margaret?"

Steven explained to her that Margaret Hinton was now Lady Margaret.

"It beats me, Steve, how that can be; but I guess I am not acquainted with the laws of this country."

Mrs. Cochrane and Steven were soon at Margaret's apartment and on being admitted were greeted by her and John Keen. Margaret did not look at all well; her face was pale and there were dark rings under her eyes that spoke of suffering. Nevertheless there was a happy look in her eyes that neither Mrs. Cochrane or Steven had seen before.

"Mrs. Cochrane, I want you to meet my future wife," said John smiling.

"Say, Mr. Keen, you thank your lucky stars that I ain't a man or I sure would have stolen this little girl from you. Come right here, honey," and taking Margaret in her arms she

held her so tightly that Margaret gasped for breath, while she kissed her again and again. She released Margaret at last and after wiping those dear, motherly eyes of hers asked John if he did not feel jealous.

"Never of you, Mrs. Cochrane," replied John, in an affectionate voice and his answer so pleased Mrs. Cochrane that John had to submit to the same treatment as his betrothed.

"I am as jealous of you, Mr. Keen, as I can possibly be. That is about the only way I know to congratulate you," said Steven.

Margaret appeared so very happy that Steven hardly knew how to tell her the sad news, and Mrs. Cochrane knowing something of what was passing in Steven's mind decided to help him out.

"Did you know, dear, that Lord Bitterne is totally blind?"

Margaret turned faint and weak and John took her in his arms.

"Mrs. Cochrane," said John in a hoarse voice, "never mention that name before us again."

"John," said Steven, "I have a story to tell that concerns Lord Bitterne, Miss Hinton and yourself, and you must hear it. Afterwards if it is your wish I shall never mention his name again.

"You know the sad story, Mr. Keen, of Lady Bitterne, George's mother?" John bowed. "Well," went on Steven, "Lord Bitterne received a letter from his solicitors last evening. It came while I was there and the news it contained was such an awful shock that it deprived Lord Bitterne of his sight.

"It appears that when Lady Bitterne was

driven from home she went down to a little place in Kent called Leewood." Margaret gave a start and looked earnestly at Steven. "She died there about five months afterwards, but before she died she gave birth to a little girl who, of course, is a sister to Lord Bitterne. The little girl was christened Margaret."

Horror, deep, frozen horror was on Margaret's face. She tried to speak but no words came from her parched lips.

There was no need for Steven to go on with his story. Everything was plain now. Mrs. Cochrane went over to Margaret and led her into her bedchamber. Margaret was really ill now and moaned piteously.

Steven tried to comfort John and poor John felt very grateful. "Keen, remember that George has received his punishment direct from God and he is suffering now more than words could express," said Steven.

Mrs. Nelson who returned that morning was sent to 'phone a doctor, while Mrs. Cochrane put Margaret to bed. The doctor advised a good night's rest and left a prescription. "She is just suffering from shock, but I think that she will be all right in the morning."

"Mr. Keen, your little girl wants to see you. You'll have to excuse me," said Mrs. Cochrane, "but I guess I'd better remain here and be her mother, because it ain't proper for you to come into the lady's bedroom if I ain't here."

John came into the room and knelt by the side of Margaret. "What is it, dear?" he said.

"John, I am so glad that you asked me to marry you on Sunday; because I was just think-

ing that now I am somebody else—you know what I mean, dear—you would have been too proud."

"Well, Margaret, I have asked you to marry me," said John.

Margaret, with a faint smile on her white face replied that she was very happy and, "John, dear, tomorrow I am going on a journey. Will you come with me?"

"Of course, sweetheart. Why I should not think of letting you travel alone in your weak state; but where do you intend going, dear?"

"I am going down to see my brother," said Margaret.

The next morning Margaret accompanied by John, went down to the country house of Lord Bitterne. He was quite ill and under ordinary circumstances they would not have been allowed to see him, but the papers that morning had blazoned forth the romantic story. So the butler called her Lady Margaret and with a husky cough wished her every happiness.

"God bless me, your Ladyship, I knew your mother, for I have been with this family for nearly forty years," and Lady Margaret took him by the hand and thanked him.

They were admitted to the bed-chamber of Lord Bitterne. His face was as white as the sheets, and his eyes were covered with a bandage. By his side sat Mary Richards who refused to leave his side day or night. She rose to her feet on their entrance and stood protectingly in front of Lord Bitterne with outstretched arms as if to shield him from their wrath, for Mary

thought at first that they had come down to abuse him.

Margaret walked up to Mary and they were in each other's arms, but far too sad to cry. John Keen took Lord Bitterne by the hand and spoke his name.

"It is John Keen, Bitterne. Your sister is here."

"Here?" said George and he turned his head and wept.

Margaret went to him and placing her arm under his head bent and kissed him.

"My dear brother," she said, "you have suffered deeply, but please hurry and get well. We neither can remember our dear Mother but it is beautiful to know that from her home in Heaven she is looking down now and smiling on our meeting. I am going to marry John in a few days and we are going out to America, but we will come home some day and see you again. Then Mary and you will be married. So goodbye, dear brother, I will write regularly to you."

George clung to her hand for awhile. It seemed to him that his sister was something more than an angel.

"God bless you both," said George in a weak voice, and he could not say anything more for he was so filled with emotion.

Margaret embraced Mary, and John in his sympathetic way, tried to tell her how splendid she was.

The next day Margaret received a visit from her brother's solicitor and she was informed that by the terms of their father's will, half of the fortune belonged to her. She would gladly have

not taken a penny, but Mr. Rider pointed out to her that she would only be robbing herself of an excellent income.

Margaret at last consented to accept her half, but she had only one thought in her mind and that was that it would help her beloved John. Three weeks afterwards Lady Margaret became the wife of John Keen and in company with Mrs. Cochrane and Steven, who had prolonged their visit in order to be present at the wedding, sailed for America.

XXIII

Three years passed, very wonderful years for John and Margaret in that great land of opportunity. John found no difficulty in making good, and today he is manager for the Greymarsh Mining Company in the little town of Molden. In addition to his duties at the mines he has also founded a small church, where Sunday after Sunday he preaches to the town folk, and his church is usually well filled. They like his way of explaining God to them. It is so different from the orthodox teaching. John tells them that such things as fire and brimstone are but products of the imagination, and that eternal life is for every one, good or bad, but that the wrong doer has to make good, if not in this world then in the next.

And surely it is a very sad thing that, after the Church has for nearly two thousand years preached the doctrine of eternal damnation, a good man like John Keen should throw its articles of faith into the discard. True, it means a clearer conception of Jesus Christ and his divine love; it also means that men and women lead better lives, for countless millions have never been able to reconcile the love of God with endless torture, and once this blasphemy is banished life eternal becomes a very precious thing.

There is a little curly-headed youngster in the home, who calls Mrs. Cochrane "Grandma," for she spends a good deal of her time with Margaret. She has never forgotten her visit to Europe,

although she has no desire to return; unfortunately she saw the worst side of European life.

Steven Hargraves is busy in New York, but never too busy to write, and always manages to spend Christmas at Molden. And in England, Lord Bitterne and Mary are happy, very happy. It is a beautiful sight to see Mary leading her blind husband through the country lanes. Her devotion is perfect and his affection apparent to all who know them. Lord and Lady Bitterne are planning a great reception next year, for John and Margaret are coming back for a visit.

Sorrow such as they all suffered has led to happiness. From sin, joy may come. Sin was created by man, injuring men and women, causing untold suffering, bitter remorse, countless tears, and yet it is but the prelude to divine happiness. The price must be paid for freedom, but when that freedom is once gained who counts the cost?

THE END

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